Marxism Today

January 83

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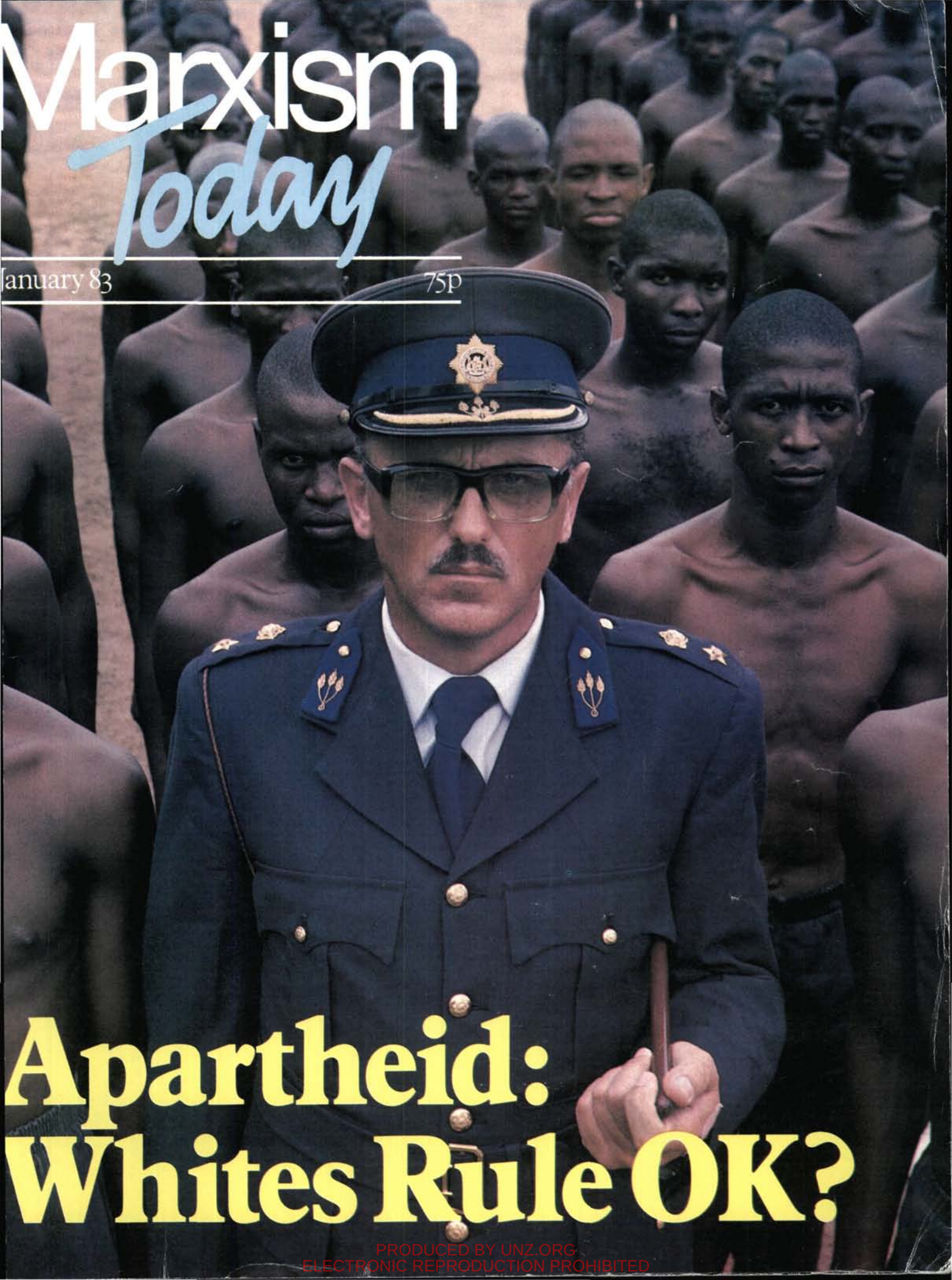

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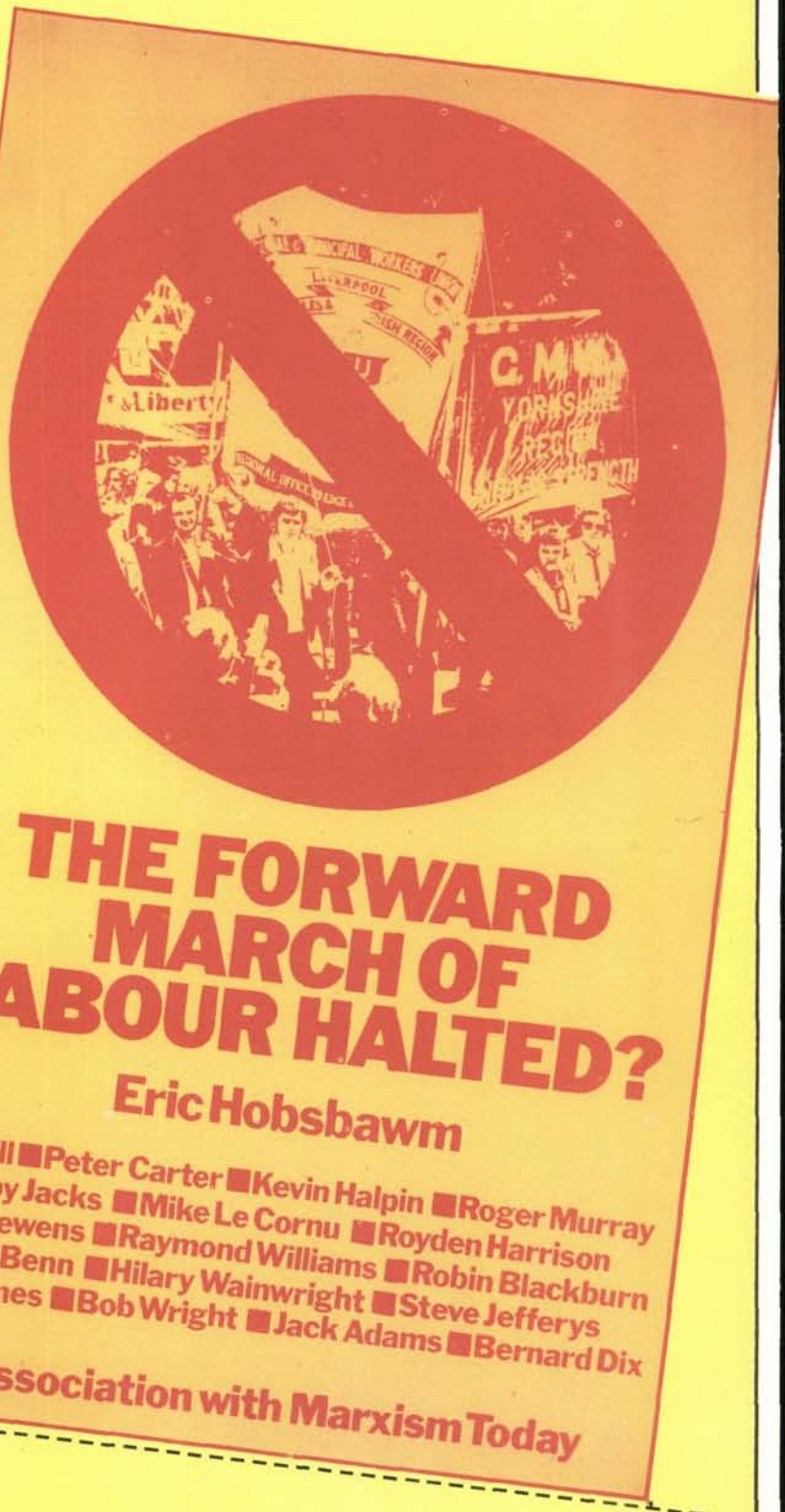
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Marxism Today

Theoretical and discussion journal of the Communist Party

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16 St John Street, London EC1M 4AY
Telephone 01-251 4406

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**Distribution**
*Newsagents:* Moore Harness Ltd
50 Eagle Wharf Rd, London N1 7ED
*Subscriptions and bookshops:*
Central Books Ltd, 14 The Leathermarket
London SE1 3ER

**Subscription rates** for one year
*Inland:* individuals £9, institutions £12
*Overseas:* individuals £12, institutions £15

The editor welcomes contributions for publication in the journal. Further details if required from the editorial office. Please send SAE if you want an acknowledgement or manuscript returned.

**Design** Chrissie Charlton
**Typeset** by Advantage Filmsetting Ltd
**Printed** by Farleigh Press Ltd (TU)
Watford, Herts

Cover design Peter Hammarling, Kathryn Tattersall
Photo: Gamma/Frank Spooner pictures

Published by the Communist Party
16 St John Street, London EC1M 4AY
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# FOCUS

John Minnion

## POWELL THE UNILATERALIST

At the end of October, Enoch Powell delivered the Brunel discourse to the Great Western Branch of the Faculty of Building in Bristol. Not on the face of it a very exciting occasion. But what he said had very little to do with either Brunel or building. The man who had resigned from the secretaryship of the Conservative Party's India Committee when Churchill did not attack Attlee's grant of independence, the patriot who had denounced the break up of the empire, seemed also to be a unilateralist and to be calling for a nuclear free United Kingdom. But what had he actually said?

Powell said nothing about the consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. He did not argue that the threat they made to the existence of the planet was so grave that their destruction was the highest priority in politics. Nor was he presenting a moral case against super-destructive war. Instead, he argued that nuclear weapons were quite simply unnecessary to the defence of the United Kingdom. This was so first because they did not deter a Soviet attack on us, and second because there were no other circumstances, the Falklands war for instance, in which they might conceivably be used: 'the proposition that possession of nuclear weapons deters attack upon, or blackmail of, the United Kingdom, cannot be sustained'.

What applied to a British nuclear weaponry, applied too, to the location on British soil of American weapons. This, he told his audience, was because if it was worth the USA having the UK as a weapons base, it was worth their denying such a base to the Soviet Union, and so they would defend us against attack anyway. But such an argument was hypothetical, because the Soviet Union did not have expansionist aims in Western Europe, and would not wish to engage in the kind of war which would be necessary to pursue them.

The extraordinary importance of this speech lies both in what Powell did say and in what he did not say. He did not argue that the possession of nuclear weapons by the UK, or the existence of American weapons on our soil, endangered peace in general or the safety of this country in particular. It was an argument of minimum force: he did not speak of the dangers of nuclear weapons, but rather simply denied their usefulness. In that sense it was a very conservative case and a very conservative tactic. Nuclear weapons were excluded from the agenda much as the ambitious scheme of a reformer might be dismissed by a canny conservative or a wily civil servant: 'quite unnecessary, and not appropriate to our needs'. It's as if, while unilateralists campaigned on the streets and, when they can get a hearing, in the media,

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with fundamental points about morality and survival, Powell was preparing to ease out nuclear weapons in committee.

All this is quite consistent with Powell's previous policies in several ways. First, despite his imperialism, he has normally been a patriot rather than a nationalist. He defended the empire rather as, in the 1950s, he defended the welfare state: since it was there, it had better be properly run. But he has always been suspicious of grandiose ambitions beyond the borders of Britain, to such an extent that when he has not been called an imperialist, he has been stigmatised as a little Englander.

Second, his rhetorical statements of principle have generally been derived from some more pragmatic assessment of national self interest. So the question he asked of nuclear weapons was, in effect, 'what's in it for us', and the answer with which he comes up is 'nothing'. So the question of whether they are dangerous does not arise, any more than it does in the case of a massive public investment in free fireworks. They are unnecessary and so, by implication, a waste of money.

But what Powell does say is also consistent with his previous patriotic populism. The issue of nuclear weapons, he argued, was about to become a major item on the political agenda. There are signs 'that the nation at large means to take the question up and not set it down again until it has satisfied itself with the outcome'. Up until now things have been debated 'on the sidelines, by and amongst minorities'. But now it is moving to the centre of things. So why did he speak when he did? Because 'those whose business it is to articulate national questions' must express in terms of precise policy what the people feel 'more by instinct and hunch'.

There is a familiar sound here, and we can all guess upon whom this new responsibility to speak for England rests. In 1968 Powell argued that he was articulating the fears of the people over race, and in 1970 over Common Market entry. Does he see himself as the expression of unspectacular pragmatic unilateralism, heading off the radical and moral arguments of CND/END with the quieter, mundane populism of 'it ain't necessary, there's nothing in it for us'? And what if he's right about the direction of the argument. Would internationalist and ethical unilateralists be prepared to work with nationalist conservatives if the result were a nuclear free Britain? Better Powell than dead?

The answer must be 'yes', but how likely is it? Powell as the voice of the people gets rather more attention when he is being the hammer of the blacks than when he is criticising nuclear weaponry. His arguments have been noted rather than publicised by the daily press, and if he hasn't actually been censored — as EP Thompson was — he hasn't been much helped either. Compare the treatment of Powell on weapons, with almost anyone in the SDP on almost anything.

But it's important to point out that Powell's arguments are good ones, and that they bring unspectacular logic to nuclear politics. They force the nuclear hawks to justify themselves as the condition of having any nuclear weapons at all, and use the powerful tactic of common sense against the enclosed and paranoid strategies of the nuclear establishment.

*Rodney Barker*

photo: Joanne O'Brien

*Dr Garret Fitzgerald, leader of Fine Gael*

## IRISH ELECTIONS

Emerging from November's general election, the Irish Labour Party was faced with the sort of political choice that would give most socialists nightmares. It had, in effect, to decide which of two right wing parties to put into power.

Past alliances and hostility to the idea of holding up a corrupt Haughey-led Fianna Fail administration effectively decided the issue. One remaining dilemma was whether Labour would support Fine Gael from the backbenches or as a full coalition partner. Within days of the poll Garret Fitzgerald, the FG leader, made it plain that coalition would be the only item on the agenda for negotiations with Labour. A repeat of the instability that had dogged the preceding 18 months was not on.

But the apparent inevitability of supporting Fine Gael again has had many Labour stalwarts wondering what if anything remains of their independent identity as socialists. The issue caused considerable acrimony in the party after its poor showing in the poll last February, and the resulting row at the Labour Ard Fheis (conference) in October led to the leader Michael O'Leary defecting to Fine Gael. The October conference decided to postpone a decision on whether to go into coalition until after an election. O'Leary and many others felt this was cheating the voters in refusing to say what they were ultimately offering. It was felt the party would be annihilated for asking for a blank cheque.

In the event, a working class backlash against the outgoing Fianna Fail government for its heavy handed health cuts and disastrous economic record, and the boost to party morale of jettisoning a leader with a reputation for the high life, helped Labour hold up its vote.

Labour's recent predicament has highlighted the apparently inescapable plight of the Irish Left in the Dail (parliament). With both main parties being of the Right, the Left is reduced to either sniping from the backbenches or joining coalitions as junior partners. Labour militants are convinced the latter course has been the kiss of death, submerging their radical policies beneath those of the larger FG ally.

As Labour enter government again this problem continues to hang over them. Fine Gael was deliberately vague in its election campaign about its hair shirt plan for crisis management. But controversial health, education, and social welfare cuts are certain. Taxation of short term dole payments is also a possibility and may make Labour wonder what they are doing in such an alliance.

Differences like these and the small majority of six seats over the combined opposition will make FG leader Dr Garret Fitzgerald's survival as Prime Minister for a full term less than a certainty. Mindful of the source of his Dail support, Fitzgerald has emphasised his determination to tackle the deep rooted problem of poverty — 20% of the population depend on social welfare as their

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main income — and moderate spending cuts with measures to protect the less well-off. How much of these commitments will survive beyond election rhetoric remains to be seen.

Another possible rift in the coalition ranks may result from the monetarist drift of Fine Gael economic planners, notably John Bruton, the 34 year old Finance Minister under the last Fine Gael-led administration. Labour leaders have consistently warned they will not accept an Irish version of Thatcherism.

There is a coalition consensus, however, on the inevitability of big cuts in runaway state spending — partly resulting from the Fianna Fail tactic of buying expensive votes in the short term and worrying about the consequences later. This led to maintaining an unnecessary oil refinery in Cork at huge expenses, a £57m deal for North Dublin development to secure the vote of independent socialist TD (MP) Tony Gregory, and most bizarre of all, the building of an international airport near the shrine at Knock in the bogs of Co Mayo to win votes in the Gaelic-speaking West.

The country now has one of the world's highest per capita foreign debts, a fact that has led to enormous inflationary pressures. Labour have accepted the need to cut this debt as an urgent priority. Their only difference with Fine Gael on this is wanting to plan repayments over six instead of four years to avert higher unemployment and deeper recession.

A key factor in the return of coalition government has been the decline in Fianna Fail's traditionally large working class vote. Unemployment on a par with that of Britain and Belgium, roaring inflation — more than double the UK figure — and crippling income tax on PAYE workers have swung votes to Labour and the Marxist Workers' Party. The transferrable vote PR system helps pass their anti-FF votes on to Fine Gael in constituencies where Left candidates fail.

One of the enduring features of Irish politics apparent in the last election has been the unwillingness of voters to move from one of the two big parties constituted on the republican divide to the other. Disillusioned voters therefore switch their first preferences to Labour and the Workers' Party.

What is now emerging is a growing urban working class vote for parties of the Left. Particularly in Dublin's huge bleak housing estates that have sprung up without even a minimum of services since the boom years of the 60s and early 70s, old FF/FG allegiances are crumbling. Significantly, Fianna Fail long regarded as Europe's most efficient vote-getting machine, has now seen its share of Dail seats slide from over 100 in 1977 to just 75 today. It now holds a mere 18 out of 48 seats in the Dublin constituencies.

The rising Workers' Party, though down to two seats after taking three last February, increased its overall share of the vote to 3.3% (Labour hold 9.4%). Its main success this time round has been in getting veteran party leader Tomas MacGiolla elected at the top of the poll in Dublin West.

Its party membership is, by contrast, the youngest of all. It operates a forceful brand of community politics alongside vocal pressure on national issues, and is likely to consolidate its strength in opposition.

*Alan Murdoch*

## BRAZIL

The vote of the Brazilian electorate last November was unambiguously against the military regime. The four opposition parties together got 62% of the votes, won 51% of seats in congress, and the governorships of states with 58% of the country's 126 million population. This was achieved in spite of unprecedented violence and corruption, with dozens of candidates killed, gerrymandering legislation, selective government spending, smear campaigns and plain fraud. The results marked the failure of the regime to divide the opposition and to perpetuate its threadbare claims to legitimacy.

In anticipation of this defeat, the regime changed the constitution last June to ensure its continued control of key policy areas, and of the choice of the next president. Even during the election campaign it was clear that the results would have no effect on its economic policies. Yet more drastic austerity measures were already being secretly agreed with international bankers as the price for renegotiation of the $90bn foreign debt. The Reagan administration and the IMF have moved quickly to make special arrangements for Brazil, averting dangers of a default or any moves by the regime to use Brazil's position as the second largest debtor after Mexico and the Third World's largest industrial economy to press internationally for a restructuring of the Western financial system.

While not modifying the regime's policies, the election results do put the opposition in a better position to mobilise the social unrest the policies will provoke. Most votes went to the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB), which won nine state governorships and 200 of the 479 congressional seats. It benefitted from the electoral machine and role of protest vote portmanteau which it inherited from the MDB

in 1979 when other opposition parties were allowed to form. The regime's intention then of splitting the opposition has not paid off; only in one of the 22 states did a division of opposition votes allow the pro-regime Democratic Social Party (PDS) to win.

The PMDB is a broad liberal alliance without a clear political line, with support ranging from businessmen unhappy with the last two year's of sharp recession to the illegal but tolerated Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) and other small left wing parties. But PCB follows a united front strategy within the PMDB and strongly supports the regime's political relaxation, in the perhaps optimistic hope that one day the party will be legalised.

The single most important opposition politician to come to the fore through the elections is the 60-year-old populist leader, Lionel Brizola. Using a Democratic Labour Party (PDT) label, he was able to capture the key governorship of Rio de Janeiro due to the unpopularity of the corrupt outgoing PMDB governor. Brizola was endorsed by the 80-year old former PCB leader, Carlos Luis Prestes, who could not go along with his party's support for the PMDB in Rio. Regarded by the army as the evil genius of the populist government of Joao Goulard which it overthrew in 1964, Brizola may yet be blocked from taking office next March. His hurriedly concocted party sends an odd assortment of 24 politicians to congress. Another 13 seats were won by the Brazilian Labour party (PTB) which has rival claims to the populist mantle of Goulart.

The only socialist party to contest the elections, the Workers Party (PT), won few votes, returning only eight deputies. This

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was perhaps partly due to tactical voting by many PT supporters for the PMDB. The PT has the strongest party organisation, extending over the whole of this vast country only three years after its foundation by Sao Paulo trade unionists. The party has been built from the bottom up, and defines its policies through this process without reference to any imported ideology.

In the elections the PT concentrated on politicisation of workers and recruitment rather than on canvassing votes. According to its president, metalworker Luis Inacio da Silva, Lula, it was the duty of the party to combat any illusions that real power was at stake. The PCB resents the threat of the PT to its claimed leadership of the working class, but its accusations of splitting the opposition have not been borne out by the elections.

In congress the four opposition parties will probably be able to push political liberalisation forward, but the left within it will not be strong enough to increase workers' rights, such as the right to strike. The nine PMDB state governors and Brizola will have impressive administrative machines at their disposal, especially in the industrial triangle of Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais, which together produce 70% of GNP. How far the regime allows the newly elected opposition politicians to go as federal legislators and state administrators remains to be seen. In the long run it may be more significant how much political support and leadership they give to the mounting mobilisation of factory workers, shanty town dwellers and landless peasants.

*Duncan Macintosh*

## PRIVATISATION

For three weeks through October and November 1982, Birmingham social services department was brought to a virtual standstill by a strike of 1,500 workers in NALGO and NUPE, backed by other council employees refusing to carry out any of the city's revenue collecting functions. For several months previously, the right wing Thatcherite council, led by solicitor Neville Bosworth, and the council unions had been shadow-boxing over the council's determination to press ahead with plans to privatise many of the city's public services.

The dispute escalated into strike action when three social services workers in the Northfield office were sacked for following a NALGO instruction not to cooperate with a firm of management consultants, Price Waterhouse Associates, introduced by Bosworth to conduct an 'efficiency scrutiny'. The bitterly-fought strike was called off by a mass meeting of the whole of Birmingham NALGO branch after the council had agreed to reinstate the three workers and to 'see to ensure' that social services work remained in the hands of directly employed staff. The scrutiny is, however, to go ahead.

The Birmingham dispute, though fought on the unlikely territory of social services, brings into sharp focus many of the key questions around the issue of privatisation and how it can be fought. Firstly, although the action was largely confined to the social services department, it was clear from the council's response that it involved an ideological and political issue of central importance to the Tories. Bosworth conducted all the negotiations in person, bypassing both committee chairpersons and senior officers, although he was aware that the scope for privatising social services, albeit greater than the unions had previously thought, was nevertheless limited. It thus became clearer that privatisation and the cuts were simply two prongs of the assault on public services. Birmingham's council services have been pruned almost continuously since 1975, and there are well-leaked plans to cut £2.5 million off the social services budget in 1982/3. The struggle over privatisation is therefore part of a wider struggle over financial cuts, job losses and compulsory redeployment.

Secondly, although it is usually the threat to publicly owned industries such as British Gas, Britoil, British Telecom and British Airways which grab the headlines as victims of Tory rapaciousness, the scope for smaller-scale municipal privatisation is enormous. In Birmingham alone, the Tories have plans to parcel up huge chunks of the council services and deliver them to small private contractors. The list includes school cleaning and caretaking, school meals, maintenance of parks and gardens at dozens of council buildings, the city architects department, estates services and the best known example, the city refuse collection service. Although the Tories envisage these services being contracted out to very small entrepreneurs indeed, it is instructive to note the alliance they have forged with multinational management consultancy and accounting firms, who are brought in to carry out studies of council 'efficiency' and 'value for money'. It is here that small and large capital meet up.

The top eight of these firms which include Price Waterhouse Associates, Peat Marwick and Mitchell, and Coopers and Lybrand, employ 150,000 people in 2,500 offices in over 100 countries with total revenue in excess of £5 billion. Their role in privatisation is dubious to say the least: Coopers and Lybrand won the contract to do the government survey on council services which was used by the Government to justify the need to contract out council services. In Birmingham, Price Waterhouse are already the city auditors, and contributed to the discussion at the social services committee which recommended they be awarded the £85,000 contract without going to tender. The links these firms have with national and multinational capital are hardly tenuous. Small wonder that their recommendations involve privatisation and cuts.

Thirdly, the dispute raises problems with new dimensions for unions such as NALGO and NUPE, for although they have been attempting to alert their members to the threat of privatisation, the process of education is far from complete, and the members' response is patchy. Prior to the social services strike, the City Council, impressed with Southend's privately contracted refuse collection service, decided to repeat the exercise in Birmingham. Despite offering initial resistance, members of the four unions involved have now tendered for the contract themselves in a bid which will close three of the city's six depots, cut over a third from the budget of £10 million, and shed 280 jobs. A union spokesperson has been quoted as saying that they were faced with privatisation or the sack. In the event, both may well occur anyway when the contract is announced in December.

If nothing else, the limited success of the Birmingham strike has shown that the third option of fighting the selling off of direct services can give an enormous boost to the morale of union members punch drunk from years of cuts, and give the council a severe jolt. The action has also led to the setting up of a union privatisation committee which can assist and advise members faced with this threat, for privatisation means not only the loss of council control over services but also leads inevitably to massive job loss, the undercutting of union rates of pay and eventually the destruction of council trade union organisation.

Finally, the Birmingham experience does raise a number of questions about the responsiveness, accessibility and management of council services, when Tory calls for value for money and accountability, however cynically made, find such a resonance in the minds of the general public and trade union members alike. Despite the development of council workers' alternative strategies and plans in the recent past, a great deal more work needs to be done in this area if the drive towards privatisation is to be decisively defeated.

*Marion Bowl*
*Paul Sutton*

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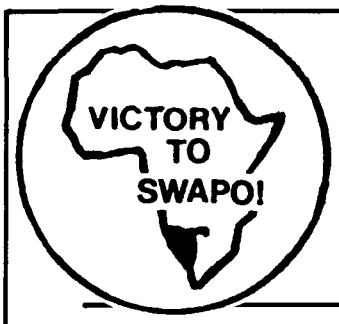


## NAMIBIA SUPPORT COMMITTEE

**Solidarity with SWAPO and the people of Namibia**

The Namibia Support Committee (NSC) has campaigned for solidarity with SWAPO since 1974. Particular campaigns are organised by sub-groups of NSC:

**Health Collective — Medical Aid for SWAPO**
Thousands of Namibians have fled the brutality of the South African army in their illegally occupied country. Many go to the front, while the young and old are taken care of in SWAPO camps in Angola.
The Health Collective has received an urgent appeal from Dr Libertine Amathile, SWAPO's Deputy Secretary for Health and Social Welfare: *"Since January 1981 we have received children between the ages of 10-17 at the rate of 300-400 a week. We are more than ever in need of medical kits - same size and content".*
SWAPO has asked us to send a further 200 kits (£24,000) as a matter of urgency.
You can help the children, women and men in the liberation struggle by sending a donation or collecting £120 to pay for a medical kit.

**SWAPO Women's Solidarity Campaign (SWSC)**
The SWSC works with the SWAPO Women's Council to link the struggles against imperialism and patriarchy. We believe that in order to fully understand the racism and sexism in our society we need to understand what is happening in Southern Africa.
SWSC has sent the SWAPO Women's Council a Landrover and is raising money for a literacy campaign.
Frieda Williams, a sister on the SWAPO Women's Council, who recently toured Britain, made an appeal for us to send sanitary towels to the women fighting at the front and the women in the camps.
SWSC is collecting both cash and packets of sanitary towels for a consignment which will be sent to Angola shortly.
You can:
* send us cash or sanitary towels;
* arrange a 'high street collection' outside a local chemist shop (leaflets available);
* ask your women's group or other organisations to discuss and support the struggle of Namibian women.

**Campaign Against the Namibian Uranium Contracts (CANUC)**
The British Government, through the CEGB, gets 50 percent of its uranium fuel for the nuclear programme *illegally* - in contravention of UN and International Court of Justice rulings - from the Rio Tinto Zinc controlled Rossing Mine in Namibia.
Successive Tory *and* Labour Governments have refused to end the illegal trade. Thus, at a recent conference of the trade unions whose members are affected by this trade, it was resolved that: *"A responsibility rests on the British trade union movement to do what the UK Government have lamentably failed to do; that is to bring about the termination of the plunder of Namibian resources. We resolve that the selective blockade of Namibian uranium is both feasible and necessary."*
A successful blockade needs widespread publicity and active support, not only from the whole Labour movement, but also from key local communities, anti-racists, anti-nuclear and student organisations. *EVERYONE'S* active support is needed.

**You can support SWAPO by sending a donation (cheques made payable to Namibia Support Committee/Medical Aid or SWSC) towards a medical kit or sanitary towels, and getting your union and branch to support CANUC's campaign.**

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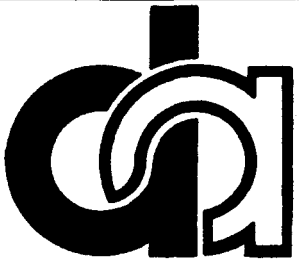

## APARTHEID THE REAL HURDLE

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**The apartheid regime faces new dilemmas. There is a growing challenge from the far Right and widening resistance from the black community. South Africa is changing . . .**

Harold Wolpe

# Apartheid's deepening crisis

*Apartheid in action at Durban golf club. Blacks and Asians on the roof, whites in the clubhouse.*

There seems to be general agreement on the South African Left that in the early 1970s (beginning with the 1973 strikes of black industrial workers), South African capitalism entered a phase of deep crisis, which has continued into the present, deepened and penetrated into the economic, political and ideological spheres of society. That the crisis is as profound as some have argued may be open to doubt, but one thing is clear: changes of considerable importance have occurred in South and Southern Africa over the past ten years and these changes are of the utmost political significance, although their full implications are, as yet, not clear in all respects.

In this article my purpose is to set out the parameters of the crisis, to examine the state's response (in particular the so-called Total Strategy) and to analyse the effects of this response on the state and on the relations between classes.

## THE 'CRISIS' OF SOUTH AFRICAN CAPITALISM

The problems facing South African capitalism in the 1980s have their roots in a series of crises which emerged, at different moments, in both the political/ideological as well as the economic sphere, in the 1970s.

### The economy

The manifestations of the economic crisis are to be seen in the stagnation, indeed, negative growth of the economy, massive and rising unemployment, the ever present adverse balance of payments and the decline of both foreign and local investment in the private sector. The dramatic but temporary rise in the price of gold in 1979 did no more than briefly interrupt the secular decline in the economy.

The condition of the economy in the 1970s has been summarised as follows:

> 'The real growth rate, which averaged 5.7% in the 1960s, was negative in the first half of 1976, and zero in 1977; the volume of manufacturing output fell by about 6% from mid-

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1974 to mid-1975 and, after a small pick-up, by even more during 1976-77. Private sector investment in manufacturing began to drop from 1974, while total investment declined by about 13% between 1975 and 1977 as the state was forced to cut back spending on its projects. Slow growth meant that black unemployment rose even more quickly than during the 1960s, while the number of white, coloured and asian jobless, increased by 250% in the three years from January 1974. Meanwhile, there was mounting balance of payments difficulties, largely the result of high import requirements of state expenditures on defence and investment projects (these also being a primary cause of rising inflation rates). Such difficulties were compounded by the fall in the gold price from early 1975 and reached a breaking point by the end of that year. A full 25% of foreign exchange reserves were lost during the first quarter of 1976, forcing the government to turn to the IMF for an emergency loan and to apply deflationary policies at home, thereby plunging the economy even further into crisis. The drying-up of foreign capital inflows in June of that year, after the start of the Soweto events, merely exacerbated this situation' (J Saul and S Gells 'The Crisis in South Africa, *Monthly Review* July-August 1981 p23)

The 1979 rise in the price of gold improved the balance of payments position, the level of investment and the real growth rate. But this improvement did not last long. As the *Financial Mail* (6.10.1982) reported: '. . .the balance of payments current account was transferred from a surplus of almost R3billion ($1.53bn) in 1979 to a deficit of R3.7bn ($1.89bn) in 1981. The deficit is now running at an annual rate of R5.4bn ($2.8bn)'. And similarly foreign investment and economic growth are once more on the decline.

## Specific problems

While the difficulties of the South African economy must, of course, be seen in the context of the current economic crisis of capitalism on a world scale, nevertheless, there are a number of conditions which are specific to South Africa and which both exacerbate her problems and make them intractable. Firstly, while South Africa has a highly developed industrial manufacturing sector, production in that sector is predominantly of consumer goods — indeed South Africa is all but self-sufficient in the production of these commodities. However, the fact that manufacturing is so heavily weighted in favour of consumer goods has the result that the economy (not only in the manufacturing sector, but also in gold mining, power, transport etc) is heavily dependent, for its functioning, on imported capital goods.

Traditionally, gold sales have met, at least to a large extent, the deficits created by the importation of capital goods, but, given the fall in gold prices, this solution becomes less and less available. The alternative is for South Africa to win external markets for the sale of agricultural and consumer commodities. The success of this strategy depends on the capacity of South African manufacturing to compete with the goods produced in other countries, including the advanced capitalist economies. This, in turn, is dependent on developing the productivity of South African manufacturing which requires increased capital imports, again putting pressure on the balance of payments. It has been argued by some that this is the path which South African monopoly capital is intent on following and which accounts, in part, for the measures of the Total Strategy. I will return to this later.

Secondly, notwithstanding the above, important sectors of the South African economy — mining, agriculture and non-monopoly manufacturing — remain dependent on cheap black labour. This, together with the problems generated by the huge army of black unemployed (estimated at over 2 million) and the measures entailed (security and military forces) in maintaining political domination over the black population, have involved the state in massive and growing expenditures which have fuelled inflationary tendencies. This, in turn, has worsened the conditions of the labour force and has provided the context for the resurgence and growth of black industrial militancy. Since 1973, South African industry has been faced by strikes on an unprecedented scale and this has been accompanied by the growth of an independent and militant black trade union movement which, despite legal and police harassment and persecution, has expanded its organisations, engaged in organised strike action and struggled for recognition and the abolition of the constraints which the state attempts to impose upon it.

## The political sphere

Four developments in the political sphere have threatened the stability of the regime, and, some have argued, white domination. In the first place, the industrial action of the black workers at the point of production has been accompanied by the resurgence and intensification of black political struggles. A number of features of this renewed political activity need to be emphasised. The emergence of the black consciousness movements and other political activity in the late 1960s and early 1970s signalled a renewed entry of the masses into political struggle and culminated in the 1976 uprisings in Soweto. This marked only the beginning, for since then mass action has taken place in relation to political trials, funerals following the death in detention of trade union and political detainees, and on a host of other issues, in particular relating to conditions of life in black communities.

In the second place, these struggles have gone beyond the limitations of black consciousness and have become increasingly linked with the policy and strategy of the African National Congress. This has occurred in two ways. The ANC itself has strengthened its internal organisation and expanded its directly political activities and, at the same time, spontaneous actions by the people as well as organised action under the auspices of various organisations have increasingly adopted the ANC, its leading personnel (in particular Mandela) and its policies as their own point of reference.

Thirdly, the trade union and community struggles have frequently become fused into a single struggle with the communities providing strong, active support for union demands. And finally, Umkhonto We Sizwe (the armed wing of the liberation movement) has shown increasing capability, intensified its activities and scored many important successes.

In brief, then, today the state faces an increasingly organised and open political challenge in both the industrial sector as well as within the state established apparatuses (Bantu Education, Bantustans, etc), in mass action in the communities and, at the same time, an escalation of the armed struggle.

The problems facing the regime through these internal pressures are compounded by the changes in the Southern African region and by the pressures from South Africa's main foreign friends. In the Southern African region, the threatened defeat of Portuguese colonialism drove the regime into a policy of detente with the front line states which, however, collapsed with the failed intervention in the Angolan war. This was followed by the establishment of the People's Republics of Angola and Mozambique and the defeat of the racist regime in Zimbawe. Internationally, South Africa's isolation has been accentuated by the pressures put on her by the USA and other countries to carry through a minimum policy of reforms.

## Ruptures in the Afrikaners community

This is not all however, for the political crisis of the dominant forces has been fur-

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ther fuelled by the crystalisation of deep divisions within the ruling Nationalist Party and within the social base of the regime in the Afrikaner people.

The National Party has, until recently, organised a class alliance of the Afrikaner petty-bourgeoisie, white workers, non-monopoly industrial, commercial and finance capitalists and capitalist agriculturists under the banner of the 'Afrikaner Volk'. Despite this alliance of classes the 'project' of Afrikaner nationalism was primarily geared, by the dominant classes within it, to the development and consolidation of a class of Afrikaner monopoly capitalists. Of course, this project required for its success that the subordinate classes in the alliance should have their interests met in the course of the struggle. Hence the nurturing of the Afrikaner petty-bourgeoisie against, for example, Indian traders and the opening of civil service jobs etc; hence similarly the protection of white workers and the support and aid granted to white farmers.

By the 1970s the 'real' project of Afrikaner nationalism had been achieved. The rise of Afrikaner monopoly capital laid the basis of a convergence of interests with English speaking monopoly capital at both the economic level (shift from cheap to skilled black labour necessitated by the mechanisation of production) and at the political level (need to ensure stability by giving some blacks a material stake in the society). This, some writers have argued, entailed an abandonment by Afrikaner capitalists of their former allies and signalled the break up of the class-alliance organised under the ideology of Afrikaner capitalism. This leads to the attempt to redefine the ideology of the 'Afrikaner volk', in a direction which will fit with the newly constituted interests of Afrikaner large-scale capital. The collapse of the old alliance is manifested in the fissures within the Afrikaner people and the emergence of new Afrikaner parties to the right of the Nationalist Party; protests against the Party's and the regime's policies from workers and others; and shifts of allegiance in parliamentary elections away from the governing party.

## THE TOTAL STRATEGY

These, then are the features of the crisis facing South African capitalism. As has already been pointed out, this has been characterised as a 'deep' — or 'organic' — crisis by the Left — that is a crisis which requires fundamental steps on the part of the regime to safeguard capitalism in South Africa. As one writer has put it, the crisis has to be met by an attempt

> 'to restructure certain fundamental relationships between and within classes, between classes and the state, between the state and the economy, and within the state itself'. (G Moss 'The Total Strategy' *Work in Progress No 11*)

The Nationalist regime itself, although expressing the situation in very different terms, also seems to have recognised that it faces problems of major, crisis, proportions. Indeed, it claimed to be meeting the 'Total Onslaught' on the existing system with a 'Total Strategy'.

It will be necessary later to return to the question of how total the Total Strategy is, since this is relevant to an assessment of the depth of the crisis and the nature of the regime's response. Here it can be simply noted that the term refers to a series of policies which were devised, at different times, to meet problems of diverse origins which arose at different points in the 1970s and after — precisely the elements of the situation which were described above. What then are the ingredients of the Total Strategy?

Firstly, as I pointed out above, monopoly capital depends increasingly upon the development and expansion of the technological basis of industrial production. This, in turn, generates a powerful demand for more skilled black labour (since this need cannot be met from the white or immigrant populations). The state thus erodes job reservation and begins to promote measures for the training of blacks and for the creation of a stable, urban black population which is said to be an essential condition of a skilled industrial labour force. Implicit here is the contention that the monopoly sectors no longer need cheap black labour; they need skilled black labour. Hence, the state: i makes a sharp demarcation between urban blacks and migrant labourers; ii begins to attempt, by 'modernising' and intensifying the law and enforcement agencies, to create a 'legal' urban population of workers and at the same time to make still more difficult access for other blacks to the urban areas.

The aim, that is, is to create a stable class of 'privileged' black workers with, as the state has expressed it, 'a material stake in the society'. As a complement to this and as a method of institutionalising industrial relations, black trade unions are both subjected to severe regulation and offered recognition under certain conditions.

### Incorporation and differentiation

Secondly, the Total Strategy is also concerned with the black petty-bourgeoisie. In this sphere, the almost exclusively restrictive policies which the state pursued in the 1960s and 1970s are beginning to give way to measures which are, indeed, leading to the growth and to some extent the enrichment of various fractions of an African petty-bourgeoisie. Thus in the urban areas, certain of the obstacles which previously restricted the growth of black businesses have been modified, there is increasing intertwining of black and white merchant capital, and financial institutions have been created by black businessmen. The National African Chamber of Commerce (NAFCOC) is a vocal and strong agent of a small but burgeoning black, urban petty-bourgeoisie class. Furthermore, in the Bantustans the petty-bourgeoisie have been provided with the political and some of the economic means for their self expansion — control of subordinate state structures, access to financial resources through these structures and through private loans, granting of licences for trade etc. Here too the state has provided a black class with limited means to obtain a 'stake in the society'.

Thirdly, the Total Strategy encompasses proposals concerning the political representation of the different black communities outside of the Bantustans. Within African townships attached to the urban areas, provision has been made for the establishment

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of elected councils with extremely limited powers. These councils have been strongly opposed by the ANC and other organisations and have gained very little support from the people as shown by the paltry turn out at the elections. Nonetheless, the state sees these elected councils as the major mechanism of African representations inside 'white' South Africa. In addition there are proposals under discussion to create a triracial-tricameral parliament for whites, asians, and coloureds. These proposals have to be understood in the context of the recent changes designed to weaken parliament generally in relation to the executive. This will be touched on later.

Fourthly, although a much earlier development, the Bantustan policy is explicitly projected as part of the Total Strategy, particularly in three respects: the Bantustans are intended to provide the areas in which Africans excluded from 'white' South Africa can be located. There they will exercise the political and citizen rights which as already stated, will not be available to them in 'white' South Africa. Furthermore, Bantustans constitute the means for the expansion of a fraction of the black petty-bourgeoisie. Finally, the Bantustans are intended to constitute part of the 'constellations of Southern African states', that is to say, together with the independent states of the region the Bantustans will be brought into stable and supposedly mutually supportive economic and political relations with South Africa.

## A BASIC RESTRUCTURING

These, then are the basic elements of the Total Strategy. It is, of course, possible to get into the game, which has occupied so much space in the media, of asking whether the measures described are really reforms or merely cosmetic changes. To pose the question in this way is, however, entirely irrelevant. The important question is not whether a certain policy amounts to a reform, but rather why it was introduced and what are its effects? How does it sharpen the contradictions and affect the contending forces? If a new measure provides increased 'space' for struggle against the regime, so much the better.

> they no longer need cheap black labour; they need skilled black labour

More generally, the question is how policies and other developments may bring about new conditions of class relations and provide a basis for new class alignments. As was pointed out above, it has been strongly argued by some that the Total Strategy is aimed at bringing about a more or less fundamental restructuring of classes. It is important then to examine the strategy, not as 'reform' but in terms of the possible re structuring of class alignments and of the state.

One line of argument is that the effect of the Total Strategy has been to set in train a process of deracialisation of South African capitalism. Thus, on the one hand, the recognition of black trade union rights and access to skilled work are seen as the beginning of the breakdown of racialism in production, and, on the other hand, and more importantly, the concessions made to the black petty-bourgeoisie are seen as resulting in something of a convergence between the interests of this class and white capital. Hence, the struggle for national liberation has become relegated to history and the black workers are increasingly becoming involved in a 'pure' class struggle against both white and black capital.

This position can be argued at all only upon the condition that the focus is restricted to the measures which the state itself includes under the label of the Total Strategy. That is to say, the deracialisation thesis is plausible only if the regime's characterisation of its Total Strategy is taken at face value. But the point is that the label Total Strategy serves an ideological/political function in the sense that it describes as 'total' that which is only partial. That is to say, it includes some of the state's policies under that title but, by silence, excludes others. What it excludes, and what the deracialisation position thereby also neglects, is precisely those government and state policies which contradict the deracialisation effect which may, however, modestly be entailed in the policies discussed above. That is to say, the Total Strategy measures must be analysed together with the entire range of state policies of which the Total Strategy constitutes only a relatively small part.

### What has not changed

Thus, while it is necessary to recognise the importance of the changed conditions of the struggles of the black workers — the new possibilities for the organisation of black workers and the space for trade union struggles *and* the further differentiation, in terms of skills, of the black working class — at the same time it is of the utmost importance to place these changes in the context of the expansion of the apparatuses of coercion and the accompanying intensification of repression of *black people*, the application and further development of the measures of control of urban *blacks*, and of rural-urban migration of *blacks* workers, the deprivation of *blacks* (mainly workers) of South African citizenship, the continued elaboration (albeit with changes) of laws applying specifically to *black* workers and so on. In short, whatever the internal differentiation among black workers, the black working class as such continues to stand in a quite specific relation of subordination to capital and the state.

The black petty-bourgeoisie, however, now emerges in a more contradictory position than before. Undoubtedly its economic development tends to draw it away from the black working class and, perhaps, to make it fearful of the revolutionary intentions of the liberation movement. On the other hand, the structure of racial domination blocks the possibilities of its incorporation into the social structures which are defined in racially exclusive terms and hence there are severe limits on possible alliances between this class and the dominant white classes.

So far the effects of the Total Strategy on black classes have been addressed. What, however, is the situation among the white classes? It has been strongly argued by some writers that a major restructuring of classes has taken place within the white population. Paradoxically, it will be seen that this view must also rest, if it is to make any sense, on the assumption, which I have already disputed, that the black classes' position *vis à vis* capital has altered in some major way.

### Rupture amongst the whites?

The argument about white class restructuring takes as its starting point the convergence of Afrikaner and English monopoly capital and the supposed collapse of the class alliance which constituted the social basis of Afrikaner nationalism.

The basis of the argument that there has been a major restructuring of white classes is that the economic interests of Afrikaner capital and its former allies among the Afrikaner people are now so divergent that, in the common interests of all fractions of monopoly capital, Afrikaner capital's former allies must be abandoned — this is necessary because the 'reforms' that monopoly capital requires (a skilled, stable, black labour force etc) contradicts the interests of the white subordinate classes and can only be secured for the blacks at the expense of the white workers. Similarly, the contention is that the interests of the black petty-bourgeoisie can be advanced only at the expense of the white petty-bourgeoisie. Here we see the convergence with the 'deracialisation' thesis — the common basis is the view that the black classes are entering a new, more favourable, relationship with capital.

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If this is correct, it follows that the ruling party can no longer properly represent the multiplicity of white class interests which were expressed by Afrikaner nationalism and its ideology. For the subordinate white classes there is a crisis of representation.

The difficulty with this approach, however, derives as in the case of the 'deracialisation thesis', from the fact that the analysis is again based primarily only on those policies which the regime defines as part of its Total Strategy. In this case, however, in restricting attention to the measures which are claimed to favour the black working-class and petty-bourgeoisie, what is forgotten is that almost the entire range of political and economic structures and policies which serve to reproduce the advantaged position of the white fractions of the class structure continue in operation. In this respect, there is little to suggest that the political/economic interests of monopoly capitalism involve a general undermining of the position of white subordinate classes. On the contrary, increasing income differentials in favour of whites, upward job mobility, education, status, business and other advantages are still the order of the day.

### Cosmetic or substantive

The argument that the Total Strategy, by granting black classes a stake in the society creates a basis of support among blacks for the dominant classes and, at the same time, involves abandoning the support of the white classes who already have, not only a stake but also electoral and other forms of power, is, to say the least, curious. This position is arrived at because changes which affect sections of the white classes are assumed to be of general application. It is quite true that the uneven pace of change in the industrial division of labour has left a section of white workers vulnerable to competition from black workers; likewise, mobility out of industrial and/or low level white collar jobs has not been available to all whites in these spheres. The entry of large-scale capital into agriculture has adversely affected sections of Afrikaners in agriculture; similarly, in commerce, not all Afrikaners have prospered. Undoubtedly these fractions of the Afrikaner classes do find themselves in opposition, from the right, to the Nationalist Party and government as do other sections of the population who define the changes in the ideology of Afrikanerdom which the regime projects, as a betrayal of the Volk. These oppositional forces, however, by no means encompass the major sections of the Afrikaner subordinate classes.

There is, then, nothing to suggest that monopoly capital has been driven into a

photo: Camera Press

position of abandoning its class allies among the whites in order to stave off the imminent collapse of capitalism in South Africa. The dominant forces in South Africa still present themselves as the representatives of the national (white) interests.

Does it follow from this that we must dismiss the changes which have been and are occurring in South Africa as cosmetic and unimportant from the point of view of the strategy of the liberation movement? The answer is already clear — the vulnerability of the developing black petty-bourgeoisie to co-option, the increased power of the black working class, the emergence on an enlarged scale of even more extreme elements of white classes, the entry of the military and big business into the state apparatuses, the alignment between English and Afrikaner monopoly-capital — these are all extremely important changes to which reference has already been made.

### A central contradiction

In this brief account of the conditions of the present situation in South Africa, reference has been made to a number of contradictory tendencies, such as those relating to the position of the black petty-bourgeoisie, and to the establishment of a stable skilled black labour force exercising trade union rights and thus threatening the conditions of reproduction of the system of cheap labour. These, and other contradictions, have found expression in the state and in the relationships between different state apparatuses. In this respect the conditions which have been outlined have given rise to a major contradiction at the political level.

On the one hand, the composite pressures operating throughout the 1970s have had as their result the modification of the state's all but exclusively coercive management of mass opposition, by the introduction of some policies which, however hedged around with restrictions, have opened up terrains of political struggle which were simply not available in the 1960s. The ideology of 'reform' within which the Total Strategy does not merely mask continued violent domination; it also signals the development of new and/or reinstated arenas of political struggle — the trade union front, within education and the student movement, inside the black communities, the struggle for women's rights, the cultural front, in the churches and so on. That is to say, the political opposition has won diverse terrains of political action which, despite a degree of state interference, continue as important bases of mobilisation.

On the other hand, as has already been pointed out, not only is there a continuous development and expansion of the power of the state repressive apparatuses but, and this is the new feature, this occurs under a process of increasing militarisation of the state.

Thus, at one and the same time, we have the opening up of new possibilities of mass political action and the massive strengthening and militarisation of the state coercive agencies. Indeed, the militarisation of the state has become a dominant feature of the current period with the military intervening not only internally but more particularly, at present, in the attempt to destabilise and bring about the collapse of the socialist regimes in Angola and Mozambique.

Significantly, these developments are being accompanied by measures which have the effect of increasing the independence of the executive arm of the state from both parliament and also the organisations of the ruling party. These, in brief, include: i the steps taken by the leadership to deprive Nationalist party conferences of the power to determine policy — the party conferences are restricted to the discussion of matters of principle not of policy; ii the measures introduced by the prime minister to sever parliamentary control over the executive by the establishment of cabinet committees responsible to the prime minister; the setting up of the president's council over which parliament has no control; iii the involvement of the military in the State Security Council and in a growing number of state apparatuses; iv the inclusion of representatives of big business in a variety of state apparatuses.

Whatever the explanation for this process of concentration of power in the executive of the state, it is clear that the state is becoming equipped to meet a double threat — the most determined opposition from the far Right and the increasingly well organised and growing mass movement and armed struggle (supported by some neighbouring states) from the side of the working class and national liberation movement. □

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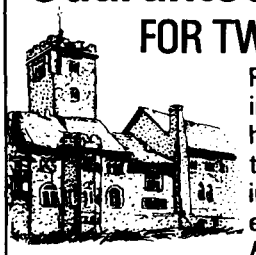

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**Patriotism in the hands of the labour movement is a powerful weapon. Patriotism in the hands of the Right is fraught with danger. The Falklands war sounded some alarm bells which the Left ignores at its peril.**

Eric Hobsbawm

# Falklands Fallout

photo Barry Lewis/Network

More has been talked about the Falklands than about any other recent issue in British and international politics and more people lost their marbles about this than about almost anything else. I don't mean the great bulk of the people, whose reactions were probably considerably less passionate or hysterical than those whose business it is to write, and formulate opinions.

More people lost their marbles about this than about almost anything else

I want to say very little indeed about the origins of the Falklands war because that war actually had very little to do with the Falklands. Hardly anybody knew about the Falklands. I suppose the number of people in this country who had any personal relations with the Falklands or even knew anybody who had been there, is minimal.

The 1680 natives of these islands were very nearly the only people who took an urgent interest in the Falklands, apart of course from the Falkland Island Company,

This article is an edited version of a talk given at the recent Moving Left Show organised by *Marxism Today*.

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which owns a good deal of it, ornithologists and the Scott Polar Research Institute, since the islands are the basis of all the research activities in the Antarctic. They were never very important, or at least they haven't been since World War I or perhaps just the beginning of World War II.

They were so insignificant and so much out of the centre of interest, that Parliament let the running be made by about a dozen MPs, the Falklands lobby, which was politically a very, very mixed lot. They were allowed to stymie all the not very urgent efforts of the Foreign Office to settle the problem of the islands' future. Since the government and everybody else found the Falklands totally without interest, the fact that they were of urgent interest in Argentina, and to some extent in Latin America as a whole was overlooked. They were indeed far from insignificant to the Argentines. They were a symbol of Argentine nationalism, especially since Peron. We could put the Falklands problem off for ever, or we thought we could, but not the Argentinians.

**A question of neglect**

Now, I'm not judging the validity of the Argentine claim. Like so many nationalist claims it can't bear much investigation. Essentially it's based on what you might call 'secondary school geography' — anything that belongs to the continental shelf ought to belong to the nearest country — in spite of the fact that no Argentines had ever actually lived there. Nevertheless we're bound to say that the Argentine claim is almost certainly rather stronger than the British claim and has internationally been regarded as rather stronger. The Americans for instance never accepted the British claim, whose official justification changed from time to time. But the point isn't to decide which claim is stronger. The point is that, for the British government, the Falklands were about as low as they could be on its list of priorities. And it was totally ignorant of Argentine and Latin American views, which are not merely those of the junta but of all Latin America.

As a result it managed, by withdrawing the one armed ship, The Endurance, which had always been there symbolically indicating that you couldn't take the Falklands over, to suggest to the Argentinian junta that the UK wouldn't resist. The Argentine generals, who were patently crazy and inefficient as well as nasty, decided to go ahead with the invasion. But for mismanagement by the UK government, the Argentine government would pretty certainly not have decided to invade. They miscalculated and they should never have invaded but it's perfectly clear that the British government actually precipitated the situation, even though it did not mean to. And so, on April 3 the British people discovered that the Falklands had been invaded and occupied. The Government should have known that an invasion was imminent, but claimed it didn't, or at any rate if it did know it took no action. This is of course being investigated at the moment by the Franks Commission.

**An upsurge of popular feeling**

But what was the situation in Britain when war broke out and during the war itself? Let me try and summarise it fairly briefly. The first thing that happened was an almost universal sense of outrage among a lot of people, the idea that you couldn't simply accept this, something had to be done. This was a sentiment which was felt at all levels right down to the grass roots and it was unpolitical in the sense that it went through all parties and was not confined to the Right or to the Left. I know of lots of people on the Left within the movement, even on the extreme Left who had the same reaction as people on the Right. It was this general sense of outrage and humiliation which was expressed on that first day in Parliament when the pressure for action actually came not from Thatcher and the Government, but from all sides, the ultra-Right in the Conservatives, the Liberals, and Labour, with only the rarest of exceptions. This I think was a public sentiment which could actually be felt. Anybody who had any kind of sensitivity to the vibes knew that this was going on, and anyone on the Left who was not aware of this grass roots feeling, and that it was not a creation of the media, at least, not at this stage, but genuinely a sense of outrage and humiliation, ought seriously to reconsider their capacity to assess politics. It may not be a particularly desirable sentiment, but to claim that it didn't exist is quite unrealistic.

> This upsurge of feeling had nothing to do with the Falklands as such

**Irresistible decline**

Now this upsurge of feeling had nothing to do with the Falklands as such. We have seen that the Falklands were simply a far-away territory swathed in mists off Cape Horn, about which we knew nothing and cared less. It has everything to do with the history of this country since 1945 and the visible acceleration of the crisis of British capitalism since the late 1960s and in particular the slump of the late 70s and early 80s. So long as the great international boom of Western capitalism persisted in the 50s and 60s even the relatively weak Britain was to some extent gently borne upwards by the current which pushed other capitalist economies forward even more rapidly. Things were clearly getting better and we didn't have to worry too much although there was obviously a certain amount of nostalgia around the place.

And yet at a certain stage it became evident that the decline and crisis of the British economy were getting much more dramatic. The slump in the 70s intensified this feeling and of course since 1979 the real depression, the deindustrialisation of the Thatcher period and mass unemployment, have underlined the critical condition of Britain.

So the gut reaction that a lot of people felt at the news that Argentina had simply invaded and occupied a bit of British territory could have been put into the following words: 'Ours is a country which has been going downhill for decades, the foreigners have been getting richer and more advanced than we are, everybody's looking down on us and if anything pitying us, we can't even beat the Argentinians or anybody else at football any more, everything's going wrong in Britain, nobody really quite knows what to do about it and how to put it right. But now it's got to the point where some bunch of foreigners think they can simply march some troops onto British territory, occupy it and take it over, and they think the British are so far gone that nobody's going to do anything about it, nothing's going to be done. Well, this is the straw that breaks the camel's back, something's got to be done. By God we'll have to show them that we're not really just there to be walked over.' Once again, I'm not judging the validity of this point of view but I think this is roughly what a lot of the people who didn't try and formulate it in words felt at that moment.

**Decline of the Empire**

Now in fact, we on the Left had always predicted that Britain's loss of Empire, and general decline would lead to some dramatic reaction sooner or later in British politics. We hadn't envisaged this particular reaction but there's no question that this was a reaction to the decline of the British Empire such as we had predicted for so long. And that is why it had such very wide backing. In itself it wasn't simply jingoism. But, though this feeling of national humiliation went far beyond the range of simple jingoism, it was easily seized by the Right and it was taken over in what I think was politically a very brilliant operation by Mrs Thatcher and the Thatcherites. Let me quote her in the classic statement of what she thought the Falklands

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war proved: 'When we started out there were the waverers and the faint-hearts, the people who thought we could no longer do the great things we once did, those who believed our decline was irreversible, that we could never again be what we were, that Britain was no longer the nation that had built an empire and ruled a quarter of the world. Well they were wrong.'[1]

In fact the war was purely symbolic, it didn't prove anything of the kind. But here you see the combination of somebody catching certain popular vibes, and turning them in a right wing (I hesitate, but only just, to say a semi-fascist direction). That is why from the right wing point of view it was essential not simply to get the Argentinians out of the Falklands, which would have been perfectly practicable by a show of force plus negotiation, but to wage a dramatic victorious war. That is why the war was provoked by the British side whatever the Argentine attitude. There's little doubt that the Argentinians, as soon as they discovered that this was the British attitude, were looking for a way out of an intolerable situation. Thatcher wasn't prepared to let them because the whole object of the exercise was not to settle the matter now but to prove that Britain was still great, if only in a symbolic fashion. At virtually every stage the policy of the British government in and out of the United Nations was one of total intransigence. I'm not saying that the junta made it easy to come to a settlement but I think historians will conclude that a negotiated withdrawal of the Argentinians was certainly not out of the question. It wasn't seriously tried.

photo Daily Express

### A new alliance

This provocative policy had a double advantage. Internationally, it gave Britain a chance to demonstrate her hardware, her determination and her military power. Domestically, it allowed the Thatcherites to seize the initiative from other political forces within and outside the Conservative Party. It enabled a sort of take-over by the Thatcherites not only of Conservative camp but of a great area of British politics. In a curious way the nearest parallel to the Thatcherite policy during the Falklands war is the Peronist policy which, on the other side, had first launched the Falklands into the centre of Argentine politics. Peron, like Mrs Thatcher and her little group, tried to speak directly to the masses using the mass media, over the heads of the establishment. In our case that included the Conservative establishment as well as the Opposition. She insisted on running her own war. It wasn't a war run by Parliament. It wasn't even run by the Cabinet; it was a war conducted by Mrs Thatcher and a small War Cabinet, including the chairman of the Conservative Party. At the same time she established direct lateral relations, which I hope will not have long term political effects, with the military. And it is this combination of a direct demagogic approach to the masses, by-passing the political processes and the establishment, and the forging of direct lateral contact with the military and the defence bureaucracy, that is characteristic of the war.

Neither costs nor objectives counted, least of all of course the Falklands, except as symbolic proof of British virility, something which could be put into headlines. This was the kind of war which existed in order to produce victory parades. That is why all the symbolically powerful resources of war and Empire were mobilised on a miniature scale. The role of the navy was paramount anyway, but traditionally public opinion has invested a lot of emotional capital in it. The forces sent to the Falklands were a mini-museum of everything which could give the Union Jack particular resonance — the Guards, the new technological strong men, the SAS, the paras; all were represented

[1] This is from a press release of her statement in July 82, after the war had been won.

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down to those little old gurkhas. They weren't necessarily needed but you had to have them just because this was, as it were, a recreation of something like the old Imperial durbars, or the processions at the death or the coronation of British sovereigns.

**Clochmerle rides again**

We cannot in this instance quote Karl Marx's famous phrase about history repeating itself, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce, because no war is a farce. Even a little war in which 250 Britons and 2,000 Argentinians get killed is not a matter for jokes. But for foreigners who didn't realise the crucial role of the Falklands war in British *domestic* politics, the war certainly seemed and absolutely incomprehensible exercise. *Le Monde* in France called it a Clochemerle of the South Atlantic. You may remember that famous novel in which the Right and the Left in a small French town come to enormous blows over the question of where to situate a public convenience. Most Europeans simply could not understand what all the fuss was about. What they did not appreciate was that the whole thing was not about the Falklands at all and not about the right of self-determination. It was an operation concerned basically with British politics and with the British political mood.

Having said that let me just say very firmly that the alternative was not between doing nothing and Thatcher's war. I think it was politically absolutely impossible at this stage for any British government not to do anything. The alternatives were not simply to accept the Argentine occupation by passing the buck to the United Nations, which would have adopted empty resolutions, or on the other hand, Mrs Thatcher's intended replay of Kitchener's victory over the Sudanese at Omdurman. The pacifist line was that of a small and isolated minority, if indeed a minority with a respectable tradition in the labour movement. That line was simply politically not on. The very feebleness of the demonstrations which were being organised at the time showed this. The people who said the war was pointless, and should never have been started, have been proved right in the abstract, but they themselves have not benefitted politically and aren't likely to benefit from having been proved right.

**A split in public opinion**

The next point to note is more positive. Thatcher's capture of the war with the aid of *The Sun* produced a profound split in public opinion, but not a political split along party lines. Broadly it divided the 80% who were swept by a sort of instinctive patriotic reaction and who therefore identified with the war effort, though probably not in as strident a manner as the *Sun* headlines, from the minority which recognised that, in terms of the actual global politics concerned, what Thatcher was doing made no sense at all. That minority included people of all parties and none, and many who were not against sending a Task Force as such. I hesitate to say that it was a split of the educated against the uneducated; although it is a fact that the major hold-outs against Thatcherism were to be found in the quality press, plus of course the *Morning Star*. The *Financial Times*, the *Guardian* and the *Observer* maintained a steady note of scepticism about the whole business. I think it is safe to say that almost every single political correspondent in the country, and that goes from the Tory ones right down to the Left, thought the whole thing was loony. Those were the 'faint-hearts' against whom Mrs Thatcher railed. The fact that there was a certain polarisation but that the opposition, though it remained quite a small minority, was not weakened, even in the course of a brief and, in technical terms, brilliantly successful war, is significant.

Nevertheless, the war was won, fortunately for Mrs Thatcher very quickly and at a modest cost in British lives, and with it came an immediate and vast pay-off in popularity. The grip of Thatcher and the Thatcherites, of the ultra-right, on the Tory Party unquestionably increased enormously as a consequence. Mrs Thatcher in the meantime was on cloud nine and imagined herself as a reincarnation of the Duke of Wellington, but without that Irish realism which the Iron Duke never lost, and of Winston Churchill but without the cigars and, at least one hopes, without the brandy.

Mrs Thatcher in the meantime was on cloud nine and imagined herself as a reincarnation of the Duke of Wellington

**Short term effects**

Now let me deal with the effects of the war. I shall here only mention briefly the short term effects, that is between now and the general election. The first of these is likely to concern the debate on whose fault it is. The Franks Commission is at present inquiring into precisely this. It is certain that the government, including Mrs Thatcher, will come out badly, as they deserve to. The second issue is the cost of the operation and the subsequent and continuing expense of maintaining the British presence in the Falklands. The official statement is that it is going to be about £700 millions so far, but my own guess is that it almost certainly will run into thousands of millions. Accountancy is, as is well known, a form of creative writing, so exactly how you calculate the cost of a particular operation of this kind is optional, but whatever it is, it will turn out to be very, very, expensive. Certainly the Left will press this issue and they ought to. However, unfortunately, the sums are so large as to be meaningless to most people. So while the figures will go on being much quoted in political debate, I suspect this issue won't be very prominent or politically very effective.

The third issue is the bearing of the Falklands on British war policy, or defence policy as everybody now likes to call it. The Falklands war will certainly intensify the savage internal warfare among admirals, air marshals, generals and the Ministry of Defence which has already led to one post-Falklands casualty, the Minister of Defence himself, Nott. There is very little doubt that the admirals used the Falklands affair to prove that a large navy, capable of operating right across the globe, was absolutely essential to Great Britain — whereas everybody else knows that we can't afford it and what's more it just isn't worth keeping a navy of that size in order to be able to supply Port Stanley. These discussions will certainly raise the question of whether Britain can afford both a global navy and Trident missiles, and what exactly the role and importance of independent British nuclear weapons is. So to this extent, they can play a part in the development of the campaign for nuclear disarmament which should not be underestimated.

Next, the future of the Falkland Islands themselves. This, once again, is likely to be of little general interest since the Islands will cease to be of any serious interest to most Britons again. But it will be an enormous headache for civil servants, for the Foreign Office and for anybody else involved because we have no policy for the future. It wasn't the object of the war to solve the problems of the Falkland Islands. We are simply back to square one, or rather back to square minus one, and something will sooner or later have to be done to find a permanent solution for this problem unless British governments are simply content to keep an enormously expensive commitment going for ever, for no good purpose whatever, way down there by the South Pole.

**Patriotism and the Left**

Finally, let me deal with the more serious question of the long term effects. The war

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demonstrated the strength and the political potential of patriotism, in this case in its jingo form. This should not perhaps surprise us, but Marxists haven't found it easy to come to terms with working class patriotism in general and English or British patriotism in particular. British here means where the patriotism of the non-English peoples happens to coincide with that of the English; where it doesn't coincide, as is sometimes the case in Scotland and Wales, Marxists have been more aware of the importance of nationalist or patriotic sentiment. Incidentally I suspect that while the Scots felt rather British over the Falklands, the Welsh didn't. The only parliamentary party which, as a party, opposed the war from the start was Plaid Cymru and of course, as far as the Welsh are concerned, 'our lads' and 'our kith and kin' are not in the Falklands, but in Argentina. They are the Patagonian Welsh who send a delegation every year to the National Eistedfodd in order to demonstrate that you can still live at the other end of the globe and be Welsh. So as far as the Welsh are concerned the reaction, the Thatcherite appeal on the Falklands, the 'kith and kin' argument, probably fell by the wayside.

Now there are various reasons why the Left and particularly the Marxist Left has not really liked to come to terms with the question of patriotism in this country. There's a particular historical conception of internationalism which tends to exclude national patriotism. We should also bear in mind the strength of the liberal/radical, anti-war and pacifist tradition which is very strong, and which certainly has passed to some extent into the labour movement. Hence there's a feeling that patriotism somehow conflicts with class consciousness, as indeed it frequently does, and that the ruling and hegemonic classes have an enormous advantage in mobilising it for their purposes, which is also true.

Perhaps there is also the fact that some of the most dramatic and decisive advances of the Left in this century were achieved in the fight against World World I, and they were achieved by a working class shaking off the hold of patriotism and jingoism and deciding to opt for class struggle; to follow Lenin by turning their hostility against their own oppressors rather than against foreign countries. After all, what had wrecked the Socialist International in 1914 was precisely the workers failing to do this. What, in a sense, restored the soul of the international labour movement was that after 1917, all over the belligerent countries the workers united to fight against the war, for peace and for the Russian Revolution.

**The British tradition**

These are some of the reasons why Marxists perhaps failed to pay adequate attention to the problem of patriotism. So let me just remind you as an historian that patriotism cannot be neglected. The British working class has a long tradition of patriotism which was not always considered incompatible with a strong and militant class consciousness. In the history of Chartism and the great radical movements in the early 19th century we tend to stress the class consciousness. But when in the 1860s one of the few British workers actually to write about the working class, Thomas Wright the 'journeyman engineer', wrote a guide to the British working class for middle class readers, because some of these workers were about to be given the vote, he gave an interesting thumbnail sketch of the various generations of workers he'd known as a skilled engineer.

When he came to the Chartist generation, the people who had been born in the early 19th century, he noted that they hated anything to do with the upper classes, and would not trust them an inch. They refused to have anything to do with what we would call the class enemy. At the same time he observed that they were strongly patriotic, strongly anti-foreign and particularly anti-French. They were people who had been brought up in their childhood in the anti-Napoleonic wars. Historians tend to stress the Jacobin element in British labour during these wars and not the anti-French element which also had popular roots. I'm simply saying you cannot write patriotism out of the scenario even in the most radical period of the English working class.

Throughout the 19th century there was a very general admiration for the navy as a popular institution, much more so than the army. You can still see it in all the public houses named after Lord Nelson, a genuinely popular figure. The navy and our sailors were things that Britons, and certainly English people, took pride in. Incidentally, a good deal of 19th century radicalism was built on an appeal not just to workers and other civilians but to soldiers. *Reynold's News* and the old radical papers of those days were much read by the troops because they systematically took up the discontents of the professional soldiers. I don't know when this particular thing stopped, although in the Second World War the *Daily Mirror* succeeded in getting a vast circulation in the army for precisely the same reason. Both the Jacobin tradition and the majority anti-French tradition are thus part of English working class history though labour historians have stressed the one and played down the other.

Again, at the beginning of World War I the mass patriotism of the working class was absolute genuine. It was not something that was simply being manufactured by the media. It didn't exclude respect for the minority within the labour movement who failed to share it. The anti-war elements and the pacifists within the labour movement were not ostracised by the organised workers. In this respect there was a great difference between the attitude of workers and of the petty bourgeois jingoists. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the largest single volunteer mass recruitment into any army ever, was that of British workers who joined up in 1914-1915. The mines would have been empty but for the fact that the government eventually recognised that if it didn't have some miners in the mines it wouldn't have any coal. After a couple of years many workers changed their mind about the war, but the initial surge of patriotism is something we have to remember. I'm not justifying these things, simply pointing to their existence and indicating that in looking at the history of the British working class and the present reality, we must come to terms with these facts, whether we like them or not.

The dangers of this patriotism always were and still are obvious, not least because it was and is enormously vulnerable to ruling class jingoism, to anti-foreign nationalism and of course in our days to racism. These dangers are particularly great where patriotism can be separated from the other

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sentiments and aspirations of the working class, or even where it can be counter-posed to them: where nationalism can be counter-posed to social liberation. The reason why nobody pays much attention to the, let's call it, jingoism of the Chartists, is that it was combined with and masked by an enormous militant class consciousness. It's when the two are separated, and they can be easily separated, that the dangers are particularly obvious. Conversely, when the two go together in harness, they multiply not only the force of the working class but its capacity to place itself at the head of a broad coalition for social change and they even give it the possibility of wresting hegemony from the class enemy.

**Extraordinary 1945**

That was why in the anti-fascist period of the 30s, the Communist International launched the call to wrest away national traditions from the bourgeoisie, to capture the national flag so long waved by the Right. So the French Left tried to conquer, capture or recapture both the tricolour and Joan of Arc and to some extent it succeeded.

In this country, we didn't pursue quite the same object, but we succeeded in doing something more important. As the anti-fascist war showed quite dramatically, the combination of patriotism in a genuine people's war proved to be politically radicalising to an unprecedented degree. At the moment of his greatest triumph, Mrs Thatcher's ancestor, Winston Churchill, the unquestioned leader of a victorious war, and a much greater victorious war than the Falklands, found himself, to his enormous surprise, pushed aside because the people who had fought that war, and fought it patriotically, found themselves radicalised by it. And the combination of a radicalised working class movement and a peoples' movement behind it proved enormously effective and powerful. Michael Foot may be blamed for thinking too much in terms of 'Churchillian' memories — 1940, Britain standing alone, anti-fascist war and all the rest of it, and obviously these echoes were there in Labour's reaction to the Falklands. But let us not forget that our 'Churchillian' memories are not just of patriotic glory — but of victory against reaction both abroad and at home: of Labour triumph and the defeat of Churchill. It's difficult to conceive this in 1982 but as an historian I must remind you of it. It is dangerous to leave patriotism exclusively to the Right.

**Rule Britannia**

At present it is very difficult for the Left to recapture patriotism. One of the most sinister lessons of the Falklands is the ease with which the Thatcherites captured the patriotic upsurge which initially was in no sense confined to political Conservatives let alone to Thatcherite ones. We recall the ease with


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which non-jingos could be tagged, if not actually as anti-patriotic, then at least as 'soft on the Argies'; the ease with which the Union Jack could be mobilised against domestic enemies as well as foreign enemies. Remember the photograph of the troops coming back on the troopships, with a banner saying 'Call off the rail strike or we'll call an air strike'. Here lies the long term significance of the Falklands in British political affairs.

It is a sign of very great danger. Jingoism today is particularly strong because it acts as a sort of compensation for the feelings of decline, demoralisation and inferiority, which most people in this country feel, including a lot of workers. This feeling is intensified by economic crisis. Symbolically jingoism helps people feel that Britain isn't just foundering, that it can still do and achieve something, can be taken seriously, can, as they say, be 'Great' Britain. It is symbolic because in fact Thatcherite jingoism hasn't achieved anything practical, and can't achieve anything practical. *Rule Britannia* has once again, and I think for the first time since 1914, become something like a National Anthem. It would be worth studying one day why, until the Falklands period, *Rule Britannia* had become a piece of musical archaeology and why it has ceased to be so. At the very moment when Britain patently no longer rules either the waves or an empire, that song has resurfaced and has undoubtedly hit a certain nerve among people who sing it. It is not just because we have won a little war, involving few casualties, fought far away against foreigners whom we can no longer even beat at football, and this has cheered people up, as if we had won a World Cup with guns. But has it done anything else in the long run? It is difficult to see that it has, or could have, achieved anything else.

**Saviour on a white horse**

Yet there is a danger. As a boy I lived some formative and very young years in the Weimar Republic, among another people who felt themselves defeated, losing their old certainties and their old moorings, relegated in the international league, pitied by foreigners. Add depression and mass unemployment to that and what you got then was Hitler. Now we shan't get fascism of the old kind. But the danger of a populist, radical Right moving even further to the right is patent. That danger is particularly great because the Left is today divided and demoralised and above all because vast masses of the British, or anyway the English, have lost hope and confidence in the political processes and in the politicians: any politicians. Mrs Thatcher's main trump card is that people say she isn't like a politician. Today with 3,500,000 unemployed, 45% of the electors at Northfield, 65% of the elctors at Peckham, don't bother to vote. In Peckham 41% of the electorate voted for Labour in 1974, 34% in 1979, and 19.1% today. I'm not talking of votes cast but of the total number of people in the constituency. In Northfield, which is in the middle of the devastation zone of the British motor industry, 41% voted for Labour in 1974, 32% in 1979 and 20% today.

The main danger lies in this de-politicisation, which reflects a disillusionment with politics born of a sense of impotence. What we see today is not a substantial rise in the support for Thatcher and the Thatcherites. The Falklands episode may have temporarily made a lot of Britons feels better, though the 'Falklands factor' is almost certainly a diminishing asset for the Tories; but it has not made much difference to the basic hopelessness, apathy and defeatism of so many in this country, the feeling that we can't do much about our fate. If the Government seems to hold its support better than might be expected, it is because people (quite mistakenly) don't put the blame for the present miserable condition of the country on Thatcher, but, more or less vaguely, on factors beyond her or any government's control. If Labour hasn't so far regained enough support — though it may still just do so — it isn't only because of its internal divisions, but also, largely, because many workers don't really have much belief in any politicians' promises to overcome the slump and the long term crisis of the British economy. So why vote for one lot rather than another? Too many people are losing faith in politics, including their own power to do much about it.

> But just suppose a saviour were to appear on a white horse?

But just suppose a saviour were to appear on a white horse? None is likely to, but just suppose someone were to appeal to the emotions, to get that adrenalin flowing by mobilising against some foreigners outside or inside the country, perhaps by another little war, which might, under present circumstances, find itself turning into a big war, which, as we all know, would be the last of the wars? It is possible. I don't think that saviour is going to be Thatcher, and to that extent I can end on a slightly up-beat note. Free enterprise, to which she is committed, is not a winner, as fascist propaganda recognised in the 1930s. You can't win by saying: 'Let the rich get richer and to hell with the poor.' Thatcher's prospects are less good than Hitler's were, for three years after he had come to power there was not much unemployment left in Germany, whereas three years after Thatcher came to power unemployment is higher than ever before and likely to go on climbing. She is whistling in the dark. She can still be defeated. But patriotism and jingoism has been used once to change the political situation in her favour and can be used again. We must be on the look-out. Desperate governments of the Right will try anything. □

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**Thatcherism is not the Moral Majority: it is not a general offensive against feminism**

Lynne Segal

# A Question of Choice

'The lives of women are changing' as Anne Showstack Sassoon argued in last month's *Marxism Today*.[1] And they have been for at least two decades now. Most of us for most of our lives are *not* fulltime housewives. But the long hours and inflexible conditions of paid work, as well as the nature of welfare provision and state benefits, still fail to register this fact. The now largely magical belief in the existence of a Cinderella always at the ready at the hearth lives on, though in most households for much of the time she will not be there. But if Cinderella has abandoned her post, surely it is an explicit goal of Thatcherism to return her to it? As the Left portrays Thatcherism, we see it stealing from the housewives shopping bag, as it chains her ever more securely to the kitchen sink.[2] Are not women losing jobs faster than men, and forced by brutal cuts in welfare provision to stay in or return to the home? It is not quite so simple as this.

Certainly, women's lives both at home and in paid work are ever more difficult and demanding. And the tensions between women's two roles in the home and the workforce can only worsen, as the increasing demands on the servicing work still done largely by women in the home are ignored or exploited by the conditions of women's paid employment. But many women cannnot abandon their jobs, even if they wanted to. All of which, as most socialist feminists are asserting ever more forcefully, is likely to place women, as a group, in the forefront of resistance to Thatcherism. But the Left and the labour movement remain only vaguely aware of the significance of the problems women face, and still resist feminist strategies for transforming the nature of political struggle.

As Stuart Hall[3] has been warning us, for at least three years now, Thatcherism has succeeded in building an authoritarian populism of the Right, drawing upon every mean-minded, nationalistic and anti-collective sentiment — the sentiments of the frightened bully under attack. Thatcherism, has one clear goal in relation to the working class: to destroy workers' militancy and undermine support for the trade unions. And just as unemployment *has* undermined workers' militancy, so too incessant union-bashing from the Tories *has* strengthened public suspicion of the trade unions. But what, exactly, are Thatcher's goals and the effects of her policies, in relation to women as a group? I think they are more contradictory, and that within these contradictions a strong resistance is possible.

### The Tories and the family

According to its rhetoric, the effects of Thatcherism on women should not be contradictory. It aims to protect and improve 'the stability and quality of family life', and to stress the centrality of women's place in the home. As central as nationalism and union-baiting to the rhetoric of Thatcherism is its appeal to the importance of the family. 'Bringing up a family is the most important thing of all', Margaret Thatcher assures all women. She sees herself as appealing to women when she asserts that the family unit must remain 'secure and respected'. Just as she sees family values as essentially women's values. 'Women know that society is founded on dignity, reticence and discipline.'[4] It is women's job to be doing that most important work of caring in the home, 'because women bear the children and create and run the home.'[5]

And yet, it is obviously easy to show that the Tory promise 'to be vigilant' in improving family life, is accompanied by policies which continuously erode any such possibility. Thatcher has pursued policies which

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make the work of caring for dependents more difficult — if not impossible.

The Tories illustrate their concern for the family by pointing basically to two things. They have enabled certain families to buy their council flats, thus becoming house owners; and they have assisted tiny numbers of parents to sent their children to private schools. That *in reality* is all that they really can claim to have done. Meanwhile public housing stock has fallen drastically as housing has been the very hardest hit of all public spending cuts. And there has been a serious deterioration in state schools in terms of buildings, textbooks and other basic supplies while parents must pay double for school meals and meet other educational costs.

**An appeal to individualism**

Family rhetoric in Conservative thought is *not* about improving how we are all loved and cared for. Quite the opposite, because it is essentially an appeal to individualism. It is about confirming that we must look after *ourselves* and be self sufficient. We are told we must look after what we can claim as *our own* — our wives, children and other 'possessions'. Because if we don't, nobody else will.

Family rhetoric in Conservative thought is *not* about improving how we are all loved and cared for

As Barrett and McIntosh point out in their new book[6], pro-family rhetoric promotes exclusion and selfishness, in what is presented as inevitably a mean and nasty world. And yet that world would seem less inevitably mean and nasty if a greater public and *collective* responsibility was assumed for meeting people's personal needs, rather than confining them to what is seen as the private world of the family. Were it not generally accepted that 'the family', and the family alone, is the only proper place for loving, caring and sharing, the barbarism of the Tory attack on welfare would surely seem unthinkable.

That our notion of the family lends itself so readily to a Tory realisation of privatisation and welfare cuts is only because of the persisting strength of the sexual division of labour in our idea of family life. Tory ministers like Patrick Jenkins have told us that the family must be the front line of defence when Gran needs help. He of course in practice means women taking full responsibility for caring for the elderly at home, but also conveniently ignored that a third of the elderly today have no living relatives. And when they do they will often live far away from Gran. A little family rhetoric is a dangerous thing. And digging deeper into the realities of family life would uncover just how much the set of ideologies which form our notion of the family serve always to obscure the multitude of inadequate ways in which most people's needs are met, as well as to obscure what actually goes on in households. Though only one in ten of households conform to the family ideal of male breadwinner, full-time housewife and dependent children, in nearly all households women shoulder grossly unfair burdens of domestic work, and countless frustrations as they attempt largely unaided to fulfil what is seen as 'their' task as sole providers of emotional and physical care for dependent and needy relatives.

**The real effects**

In hiding what are the *real* effects of Thatcherism on families with children and other dependents, Tories must conceal a very great deal. For such families are in every way worse off under this government. Child benefit has fallen since 1979, and is now worth less in purchasing power than in 1946. Changes in tax laws have been to the detriment of families with children compared to those without, while low paid parents pay disproportionately more tax than parents with high incomes. The value of maternity benefits, already amongst the lowest in Europe, was cut by the Tories. This accompanied cuts in the value of unemployment, sickness and invalidity benefit. Single parents, over 90% female and now one in three of households with children in inner London, are the hardest hit of all. It has even become almost impossible now for them to claim for 'extras', like children's shoes, clothing, or for fuel.

All capital expenditure on nurseries has been cut, and Boyson has recently repeated that this government has no intention of increasing under-fives provision, because mothers with young children should stay at home.[7] Personal social services for the elderly are now being cut, as the government squeeze on local authorities has led to cuts in domiciliary services, home help services, meals on wheels and day-care facilities.

**Back to the home?**

But has this squeeze on welfare provision been forcing women back into the home to meet the otherwise neglected needs of the young, the old, the sick and disabled? It certainly has meant that the work women do in the home has become more and more of a burden. Despite the fact that more husbands and wives now believe that men and women *should* share household chores, surveys have shown repeatedly that the bulk of housework is still done by women, even in households where women and men work equal hours outside the home, or where men and older sons are unemployed. Husbands of working wives do almost as little housework as husbands of full time housewives.[8] And housing shortages mean that women find it ever more difficult to leave violent and loveless marriages, while economic hardship makes family life grim and depressing. But, perhaps surprisingly, it is not clear that Thatcher's policies will inevitably drive increasing numbers of women out of waged work into full time housework. What they have succeeded in doing is further denying women any possibility of *choice* — choices over whether and how to engage in waged work, and over how to combine waged work with domestic work.

It is not clear that Thatcher's policies will inevitably drive increasing numbers of women out of waged work into full time housework

For under Thatcherism jobs are determined not by any Tory family rhetoric on women's place, but are left to market forces in an econmic climate of industrial decine, re-structuring and deflationary policies. At first it did look as though women workers, frequently part-time and the least secure and protected by their unions, were losing jobs at twice the rate of men. Many women did lose jobs. But overall, in a situation where manufacturing jobs are declining faster than service jobs and where the effects of new technology are unclear, women do not seem to be any longer losing jobs faster than men. For instance, as Gwyn Williams has recently indicated[9], in Wales it is predicted that within the next ten years women will outnumber men in the workforce, due to changes in employment patterns. And while

[1] A Showstack Sassoon 'Dual Role: women and Britain's crisis' *Marxism Today* December 1982.
[2] See, for example, the current series of alternative Leeds postcards.
[3] S Hall 'The Great Moving Right Show' *Marxism Today* January 1979.
[4] M Thatcher 'Women in a Changing World' Press Office, Downing Street, July 1982.
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] M Barrett and M McIntosh *The Anti Social Family* Verso 1982.
[7] R Boyson, House of Commons. *Hansard* October 1981.
[8] See A Oakley *Subject Woman* Martin Robertson 1981 pp250-251.
[9] G Williams 'Land of our Fathers' *Marxism Today* August 1982.

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certain women's jobs, like mechanical office jobs are disappearing, there is also a trend in some technologies towards making more and more jobs home workers jobs, traditionally done by women kept at home with young children.

**Deprived of choice**

Moreover, the expansion of part-time and 'job-splitting' opportunities, which Thatcherism is currently sporting, make it possible for women to do paid work on top of heavy domestic burdens. From January 1983 there will be grants for firms offering job sharing schemes. This suits many employers, as women part-time workers are the most highly exploited. On top of missing out on various workers' rights, their average hourly earnings in April 1981 were only 58% of those of full time male workers.[10] Now, ironically, an expansion of part-time work (but at decent rates, and in suitable conditions) has been pushed by certain socialist feminists, like Jean Gardiner and Sheila Smith[11], as part of their strategy to enable the sharing of domestic work between men and women, especially the care of young children. Clearly, however, it is very far from this government's intentions to promote greater choice and sharing between men and women in the home. Nor in general have they, for women are deprived of choice.

For example, many women in jobs are likely to fear leaving them to have children, because of the threat of permanent unemployment. The 1980 Employment Act means employers can now more easily refuse a woman her job back after maternity leave. So women are less free to choose to give up work to have a child, as well as knowing that nursery cuts mean that they are also less likely to be able to return to paid work, even were it available. Meanwhile, male unemployment and declining living standards will force many women to take on paid work — however exploited and unpopular, and whatever her domestic burdens.

Other women, however, and in particular very young women, who can find no jobs, may feel forced into motherhood, as the only role available to them. With no other identification with an adult role, it is not surprising to hear young women say, as I heard on a television programme on teenage pregnancy, 'You feel a lot older if you've got a baby. People don't look down on you like if you're unemployed.' Having a baby can give unemployed women a reason for living (as well as a home away from their parents). Though trying to survive as a single parent on the pitiful allowance of £30 odd a week she and her baby will receive, will most likely create a miserable life for them both.

**Socialist feminist perspectives**

So women who may wish to leave jobs will be forced to retain them while others who would like jobs will be forced to stay at home. Some feminists have perhaps too


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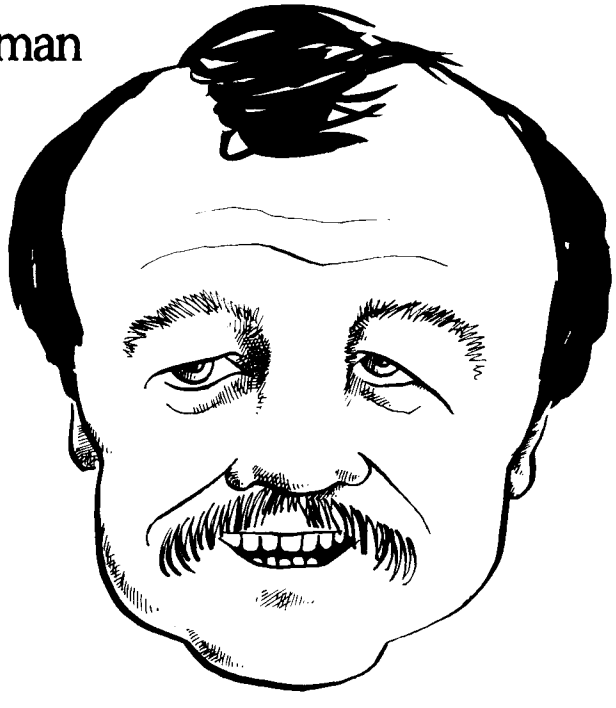

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readily accepted the *rhetoric* of Thatcherism, believing that women will be — or could be — forced back into the home. But one thing is certain, that the tensions inside the home, and the tensions between men and women can only increase. Tensions and stress will increase not just from greater poverty and poorer services, but because women's special exploitation both at home and at work will be experienced ever more sharply. Women will continue to face unequal domestic burdens on top of paid work, while unemployed husbands and sons will have been found to add to rather than decrease the work in the home. Pay and conditions in women's jobs will continue to deteriorate, as trade union power remains overwhelmingly in the hands of men, who have up until now paid little attention to part-time women workers, or to how trade union priorities might begin to integrate the conflicting demands of home and work.

## Central priorities for the labour movement and the Left must be socialist feminist perspectives

In this situation central priorities for the labour movement and the Left must be *socialist feminist perspectives*, which not only make the links between home and work, but which recognise the power relations of conflict between women and men in both spheres. It is therefore not enough to demand a woman's right to jobs, nor even improved contraception and abortion, nursery and maternity provision, as the Labour Party and the TUC — at least in principle — now do. Socialist feminist strategies also raise the question of sharing housework and childcare (and hence demanding shorter and more flexible hours in paid work), of paternity leave, and of job training and sex-segregation at work (which remains as strong as it has ever been, indeed women are today being even more firmly ghettoised into low paid, low status jobs). As centrally however, socialist feminist strategies would seek to find *effective* ways, through positive discrimination, consciousness raising, and women's collective confrontation with men, of challenging the full and threatening complexity of sexist ideology and social relations which maintain male privilege and power, whether in the workplace, the home,the Left or the labour movement.

### Unlike the Moral Majority

Moreover, it is *not* unrealistic to stress as crucial, the mobilising power of socialist-feminist strategies in this period. For either Thatcherism remains ambivalent, or it has been less than successful, in mounting an overall attack on women's rights. I suspect both factors are operating together. In this respect, it is *unlike* the moral right in the USA, supported by Reaganism, which is directly anti-feminist, explicitly against abortion and equal rights for women, as well as anti-gay. The American New Right has now successfully undermined the equal rights legislation feminists fought for, as well as attacking abortion rights and removing state funding for abortions. Its proposed Family Protection Act, supported by the tirelessly active Moral Majority and National Pro-Family Coalition, aims to strengthen parental authority and in particular paternal authority, while attacking legal funding for divorce, homosexual rights and abortion. In Britain though, the Tory Party and Thatcher's cabinet proclaim an officially 'neutral' policy on abortion, divorce and homosexual rights.

Despite a surreptitious attempt to remove non-medical reasons for abortion on forms for surgeons in March 1981 (which was successfully flouted by gynaecologists Peter Huntingford and his colleagues), the Minister of Health currently denies that there are any plans to restrict abortion services. It seems more likely that the Tories are more interested in promoting private abortion facilities, in line with their general support for privatisation. Nor have the main right wing pressure groups in Britain, SPUC and LIFE, had any particular success lately, though we might expect Thatcherism to provide a suitable political terrain for them. In 1982 LIFE lost its prosecution of Dr Arthur for failing to preserve the life of a severely handicapped baby against the wishes of its parents, although it did manage to obtain some funding for its anti-abortion services from the Department of the Environment, and has applied for further funding.

The anti-feminist Right in this country has been weakened by the continual success and vigour of feminism in mobilising support for women's rights and equality. Contrary to popular, typically misogynist myth, it was not women, as a group, who switched their votes to Thatcher in the last elections.

## The anti-feminist Right in this country has been weakened by the continual success and vigour of feminism

The highest shift in support was from skilled, white workers from the South of England.[12] I see it as a possible weak link in Thatcherism that it has not successfully crushed a feminist consciousness which is aware of the oppression of women's lives as vulnerable and exploited workers and as hopelessly overburdened housewives, mothers and daughters. It is an oppression which Thatcher's policies can be seen to exacerbate. Mobilising on a feminist platform, which embodies quite new ways of working, caring for and supporting each other will be central to any movement which hopes to defeat and replace the ideas of Thatcherism. □

[10] *Ibid* p24.

[11] J Gardiner and S Smith 'Feminism and Alternative Economic Strategy' *Socialist Economic Review* 1982.

[12] It is interesting that at the moment in the USA, voting trends indicate that it is women who are in the forefront of opposition to Reagan — to the extent that there is said to be a 'yawning gulf' between the way the two sexes are voting. C Reed *The Guardian* 4 November 1982.

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Mike Rustin

# Power to the Provinces!

The large disparities in levels of employment and wealth between regions and nations in Britain, especially between 'North' and 'South', and the polarisation of voting between Left and Right which these have increasingly given rise to, have yet to generate a coherent political response on the Left. The outmanoeuvring and defeat of the Nationalists in the devolution debates in the 1970s seemed to have killed the national question as a political issue. The Thatcher government has been a militantly centralising force, and has been able to recover its whole political position through the acting out of the extraordinary fantasy of English nationalism in the Falklands adventure. While there are signs of some revival of nationalist support in Scotland, and of a renewed interest in regional and national questions within the labour movement, this falls far short of a strategy which gives proper weight to the importance of territorial inequality and division in the British Isles. This article argues the case for such a 'territorial strategy' for the Left in Britain. It will present the advantages of regionalism, and peripheral nationalism, in terms of their possible consequences for the balance of class forces, and for the opportunities it may provide to increase the influence of the working class and its allies over the Right.

## LABOUR'S TRADITION

The advantages of regional devolution have been debated in one form or another for the last two decades in British politics (and before the war by GDH Cole). Redressing the disadvantages of the regions was part of the programme of Wilsonian 'modernisation' around the election of the 1964 Labour government. Regional disparities of income and employment had of course been preoccupations of governments since the 1930s. The Labour Party was particularly sensitive to the problems of the relatively deprived regions of the North, South Wales and Scotland, from which so much of its support has always come. Labour's programme of 'technological modernisation' was also rooted in some kind of critique of Britain's hereditary and ascriptive class system, with its bias towards rentier incomes and the financial sector, and its subordination of those of productive industry. This critique reflected the outlook and interests of rising segments of the middle class[1], frustrated by upper class recruitment to and monopoly of top positions, more than it advanced working class interests. Wilson's well-projected northern origins made him an effective critic of social exclusiveness, for which, in this early period, he was able to mobilise support from working class people too, who were glad to see 'them' for once roundly and wittily denounced. The inclusion of a regional dimension in Labour's National Plan was therefore a natural step, and should have been a means of enhancing the influence of those committed to industrial growth in the regions, both local capital and trade unions, against the national financial sector and international economic pressures. But the regional planning agencies established[2] as part of the National Plan were given little power at this time, and never became central to Labour's strategy of economic reconstruction. In any case, this strategy rapidly collapsed.

Regional economic disparities remained a preoccupation of all governments of the postwar consensus, prior to Thatcher's, for reasons of national as well as local economic interest. It was held that the economy 'overheated' through shortages of skilled labour and consequent wage-led inflation whenever full employment was achieved in the most prosperous areas of the Midlands and the South-East. Consequently, high levels of unemployment in other regions could be viewed as 'merely' waste. Resources could theoretically be brought into production in these areas without inflationary consequences anywhere else, and some measure of economic support could be justified as in effect self-financing. A whole panoply of regulatory devices, both positive and negative, were therefore deployed to try to redress regional economic disparities. These have included controls on industrial location, subsidies to private investment and direct investment by the state, regional employment premium, and policies to improve transport and communication. The Thatcher government has abandoned most of these.

## New municipal energy

The need for rationalising reforms in the apparatus of government was a developing preoccupation during the 1960s and 1970s, and was another aspect of the programme of managerialist modernisation which provided a dominant agenda for governments in this period. The reorganisations of local government, the health service, and social services, were among the major changes effected; one might also see the comprehensive reorganisation of secondary education as part of the same general programme for setting up larger, more universalist and professionalised structures. During this debate, there were some persuasive advocacies of regionalisation of government, mostly from the social democratic and 'managerialist' wing of the Labour Party. John MacKintosh's *The Devolution of Power* (1968), Derek Senior's Dissenting Memorandum to the Redcliffe-Maud Report on Local Government (1971), and Lord Crowther Hunt and Alan Peacock's Memorandum of Dissent from the Kilbrandon Report on Devolution (1973) were the most important statements of position.[3] These argued the case for regional devolution, on grounds of consistency with the proposed devolution of powers to Scotland and Wales, the desirability of reversing the centalisation of the British state apparatus and civil service (whose potential has been further revealed under Thatcher and Heseltine), and, in Derek Senior's proposal for city-regions, to resolve the harmful administrative division between borough and county, town and country, which has been so powerful an instrument for the long term defence of Tory interests against Labour municipal policies, and has confounded any potential regional challenges to metropolitan policy. But while intellectually these writers were able to present a powerful case, its political influence remained small. No connection was made between the economic plight of the regions, of which Labour governments were well aware, and the Westminster-dominated system of government, which gave them so little political leverage. Perhaps as a result, the relationship between state expenditure in the regions and their relative need has not been consistent or close.[4] Labour's own political apparatus was highly centalised, the result of a history of fear of grass roots activity, infiltration and extra-parliamentary militancy which has similarly stifled the local trades councils. The party's slender bureaucracy of regional organisers for many years had as one of its main preoccupations to monitor the provinces for signs of heresy and rebellion, and to step in and 'dissolve' errant parties where this occurred. So weak a structure was in no state to welcome the new currents of nationalist feeling when they emerged in Scotland and Wales, and turn them into a socialist resource. The Labour Party has always had great difficulty in creating any apparatus of its own which does not correspond directly to the functions dictated by the existing parliamentary constitution, which is indeed fetishised to this day.

Municipal political interests did, on the other hand, have some persisting weight in Labour's policies towards the state. Labour's efforts at local government reform, modified by the Conservatives

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after the 1970 election defeat, attempted to achieve some strengthening of the powers of its big city bases against those of the Tory counties. But the reform of local government, already diluted by the Tories in the interests of the shires in 1972, has proved quite insufficient to arrest the decline of local government in face of the financial and political powers of the centralised state which have been used so determinedly against them by the Thatcher government. While there has been an important influx of new energies and ideas into municipal socialism in the past years (for example through the establishment of industrial development agencies in the GLC, West Midlands and Sheffield, and the attempt to institute popular and radical transport policies in South Yorkshire and Greater London) it is clear that a hostile central government can now deploy overwhelming juridical and financial resources against socialist city governments.

**Scottish and Welsh nationalism**

If industrial decline in backward English regions, and the arguments for a more rationalised and decentralised structure of government was one element in the debate about regional devolution in the 1960s and 1970s, its real political force came from a different quarter — the threat to the British state posed by Scottish and Welsh nationalism. These currents made their first major impact in disillusion with the same Labour government which was toying in the early 1960s with these half-hearted regionalist notions: the first Plaid Cymru election victory was at Carmarthen in 1966, the first Scottish Nationalist victory at Hamilton in 1967. The Labour Party, especially in areas where it was directly threatened by nationalist support (Scotland), or indirectly threatened, as it thought, by competition for the largesse of the British state (the North East) reacted with hostility to the emergence of what might in other circumstances have been perceived as potential allies against the metropolitan state, and Southern Tory domination.

Consequently, the arguments, reinforced by the rise of nationalism, for generalising the claims of regional identity and autonomy to the English regions as well as Scotland and Wales fell on deaf ears in the English labour movement. English regional Labour parties are in any case vestigial structures without the roots in patronage and local power which characterise municipal parties. Leading British politicians characteristically do not emerge from a local base, as do politicians in the USA, France, West Germany or Italy, but are mostly metropolitan carpet-baggers who settle on a constituency and then make it their own after rather than before adoption as candidates. So nationalism was perceived largely as a threat to the hegemony of the British Parliament, and to the tenure of power of the Labour and Conservative Parties. Those with access to power in Whitehall showed little interest in conceding it to political forces based elsewhere.

The devolution debate seemed to many in England during the last Labour governments to be merely a wearisome distraction, a slow wearing down by attrition of the nationalist movements. In fact it had fateful consequences, diverting the attentions of the government from more important matters, and perhaps unwittingly preparing the ground for the Thatcherite reassertion of the power of the metropolitan (and imperial) State. Where subordinate classes have been divided and in conflict with one another (as over immigration and ethnic divisions, among the Protestants and Catholics of Northern Ireland, and in the majority of the British labour movement's response to peripheral nationalism), the beneficiaries have been the regressive elements of the bourgeoisie represented by Thatcherism, who are most traditionally identified with the English state.

The heartland of Thatcherism in 1979 was after all the South East and West Midlands: polarisation in the electoral geography of Britain, between North and South, has never been more marked. Thatcherism spoke loudly to English identity, against immigrants and against class, criminal, terrorist, and military threats to the nation. The Falklands crisis has now shown the potential strength of old imperial sentiments, reminding us of a history many on the Left had preferred to forget. Characteristically, this patriotic feeling was reported to be less rampant in Scotland and Wales. So far, regional nationalist threats to the British state have worked to the advantage of the Right, through the inability of the Left to bring these challenges together in any coherent programme for the reconstruction of the state. The neglect of potential territorial bases for organising support (Labour's election campaigns are distinctively national in organisation and presentation) distinguishes the British Left from more locally rooted formations elsewhere (France, W Germany, Italy, the USA).

**A centralist view**

The local response to nationalism by the Left has inevitably been conditioned by the social characteristics of the nationalist leadership in Scotland and Wales. Representing in large part the local professional class and small capital, this leadership, especially in Scotland, has been often anti-socialist. For this reason, local hostility to petty-bourgeois and often regressive social forces has masked for many working-class leaderships, especially in the Labour Party, the potential advantages of a wider geography of regional class alliances on a United Kingdom scale. The most socialist elements in the Labour Party have characteristically, in both their 'old Left' and 'new Left' variants, taken too centralist a view of the potentiality of the British state. The old Left has been parliamentarist and constitutionalist (Michael Foot's recent *Observer* articles in the summer restated this view in unregenerate form), holding that working class representation could achieve socialist changes through the agency of a 'neutral' state apparatus, whose centralisation would be a means of carrying through reforms on a universal basis. While the 'new Left' in the Labour Party perceives clearly that this state apparatus is not benign or neutral, and must first be transformed before other reforms are possible, here there is an undue preoccupation with what the central state apparatus, once in working class hands, *could* do, even if it takes a less naïve attitude to its present dispositions.

These perspectives lead to an over-reliance on narrowly working class institutions (which are often themselves politically weak, and sometimes working class mainly in name) and a neglect of the other bases of organic support which a socialist party now needs. The long neglect of the dimensions of gender, race, community and cultural activity in the Labour Party is consistent with a lack of appreciation of local and geographical dimensions, of the probable necessity to make alliances with other class strata in particular regions to meet

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[1] This literature of 'modernisation' was reviewed and criticised by Perry Anderson in his influential 'Origins of the Present Crisis', *New Left Review*, 23 (1964). While the stratum of scientific and technical workers to whom Wilson's 'technological' rhetoric was addressed were often working in new industries located in the Midlands and South East, the broad 'industrial' emphasis of this strategy linked these interests with the older provincial bases of British manufacturing.

[2] J P MacKintosh, *The Devolution of Power* (1968) discussed the fate of these agencies. Regional economic policy is discussed also by Stuart Holland, *The Regional Problem* (1976), and H Armstrong and J Taylor, *Regional Economic Policy* (1978).

[3] Further guidance to the literature on this topic can be obtained from E Craven (ed) *Regional Devolution and Social policy* (1975). The Buchanan Report, *Traffic in Towns,* was among the other important documents of this period which recommended regional planning.

[4] See Table 1 of the SDP Green Paper *Decentralising Government* (1982).

[5] This development was discussed by Cynthia Cockburn in *The Local State* (1978).

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the overwhelming power of the metropolitan bourgeoisie. The failure to find some common ground with the social forces represented by Scottish and Welsh nationalisms (if not with their political leaderships) through developing a regional programme for reducing the power of the central state, was the outcome of this. On more specific terrains (the defence of jobs in a particular town, the work of the Scottish and Welsh Development Agencies) these local imperatives are more often recognised, and possible conjunctions of interest between local capital and labour recognised and acted upon. But it has not yet been seen to be necessary to translate this necessary flexibility in class strategy to a national plane.

## THE SDP AND DECENTRALISATION

The case for regional devolution has now surfaced again in the recent publication of a Social Democrat Party Green Paper, *Decentralising Government*, which recommends the establishment of elected regional authorities and the reconstitution of the House of Lords on a basis of regional representation, in some ways analogous to the American Senate or the West Germany Bundesrat. This paper not surprisingly takes up many of the arguments expounded by former Labour advocates of devolution such as JP MacKintosh. Its argument is presented largely in administrative terms, in relation to liberal democratic principles of accountability, wider participation in decision making, and efficiency. Like earlier advocates, the SDP Decentralisation Group draw attention to the enormous accretion of bureaucratic power to central government in recent years, through regional department offices, appointed bodies such as the Health and Water Authorities (many of whose powers were originally taken from elected local government), and through ever-tighter financial control of local government. From the point of view of liberal principles and more accountable administration, these arguments are well made and many socialists might support them as such, given an alternative of authoritarian state bureaucracy.

Neither the SDP Green Paper nor the earlier advocates of regional devolution in England address themselves to the possible implications of this change in state forms for the relative powers of class interest in Britain. On the assumption that party politics is largely about the advancement of class interests, this is a dimension that needs to be made explicit. It is characteristic of Social Democrat thinking that it represses this level of politics, seeking to present its own interest in the universalist terms of ethical principles and efficiency.

One may conjecture that the SDP interest in decentralisation continues the earlier managerial interests of the Labour 'modernisers' in creating forms of administration which are both more amenable to rational professionalised control, and more responsive to the needs and interests of those they administer, (and thus better able to secure consensus and social harmony). In the 1960s and 1970s, major reorganisations of local government[5], social services, and the National Health Service were substantially influenced by the 'system theories' of corporate management, imported into the public sector from the most sophisticated thinking of the private corporate sector. These theories of corporate planning, while slow to change the actual practices of public bureaucracies, can be seen to be congruent with the interests of new strata of graduate managers and planners, seeking legitimation of their power through more 'scientific' managerial techniques.

### Middle class attitudes

But the SDP-Liberal Alliance also brings to its attitudes to government the perspective of outsiders to power, who have an interest in creating new centres of power to offset their relative exclusion from the old ones. An emphasis on legal procedures, participation and decentralisation also serves the more specific aptitudes of this credential-holding middle class stratum, and is adapted to its own distinctive resources in the contest for power. Possessing cultural rather than material capital, it is potentially the most effective operator of participatory procedures. Characteristic institutions of this stratum are the Consumers' Association, the pre-school play group movement, parent-teachers' associations, and certain kinds of association for conservation, environmental improvement, or collective 'gentrification'. These are typical social movements of the educated middle class, and are means of organising their access to benefits from the means of consumption, both individual and collective. Extension of rights of participation in administration, *and* its professionalisation through the creation of more paid expert roles for both administrators and politicians, are means of extending the influence of the representatives of this social stratum. The more participatory politics of the United States (far more elective offices, community control of schools, a tradition of community- and issue- rather than class-based mobilisation) is a model for British Social Democrats, and Liberals of the newer sort, and the USA also favours those with the greater participatory resources and skills. This seems to be the 'hidden agenda' of the SDP's commitment to decentralisation, just as a corresponding emphasis on parliamentary forms reflected the occupational and cultural advantages of earlier generations of European liberals whose typical callings were said to be journalism and the law.

There is perhaps another interest in the SDP's proposal for regional political power, also reflecting its current role as an outside challenger for political power. This is the probable benefit to the Alliance of achieving a secure regional base of power, where it believes that national political power may be difficult to attain. The Alliance is also particularly preoccupied with gaining some power of veto over the decisions of the class forces on either side of it, seeing its most feasible (or at least minimal) role as to limit the 'extremism' of left and right. The Green Paper's proposal for a Second Chamber elected from regional constituencies (representing the proposed regions equally regardless of their unequal populations) seems designed to secure such a veto power by regional coalitions over national majorities, in the same way that proportional representation is designed to make centre parties indispensable to any governing majority. This particular proposal, for equal representation of regions of grossly unequal size in the Second Chamber is the most pointedly self-interested in the SDP document. Its intended effect seems likely to be that of shoring up the influence of the strongest Alliance regions (the peripheral areas of traditional Liberal strength) against that of the Tory South East and Labour North. Socialists do not share the SDP's interest in a centrist veto, and while therefore the proposal for a regionally-elected Second Chamber should be seriously considered (it is much more likely to win support than the simple abolition of the Lords), departure from the principle of representation in proportion to population should not be.

### A common interest?

While the SDP brings its own specific perspectives and interests to the regional issue, which are different from those of the labour movement, it does not follow that there may not also be some advantage to the Left in this proposed restructuring of the state. For one thing, the disproportionate power conferred on the electoral winner in the existing 'first past the post' system has in the past four years been exercised effectively by a strong government of the Right, and with little of the resistance from 'civil society' which a left government similarly elected on a minority vote would have met. It can no longer be assumed that untrammelled power from parliamentary majorities is a resource only for the Left. What has to be

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balanced, in discussions about regional devolution or proportional representation, is the effects which these changes might have in strengthening the political centre, against the possible benefits to the Left of a more widely representative and open political structure, in which minorities and parties of the Left (including the Communist Party) would be more able to achieve representation in regional or national assemblies. It may be that a more pluralistic structure of class and cultural allegiances in Britain today would be better reflected in a correspondingly more pluralist electoral system, than through the unrepresentative and dinosaurian machinery of the Labour Party.

This indeed seems to be one of the few areas of radical change that might be opened up by the SDP 'break', and such opportunities, in a society as immobile and conservative as Britain's, should not be spurned without careful consideration. It would be myopic to repeat the sad experience of the devolution debate, when a chance to weaken the grip of the dominant classes was ignored through traditionalist Labour Party and 'constitutional' reflexes. Labour's natural inclination in discussions of decentralisation is to favour its municipal strongholds; a recent Labour proposal to devolve the powers of the Water Authorities on to local authorities suggests that this preference continues. But while the prospects for a new kind of socialist city authority under a Labour central government need to be carefully weighed in this debate, as an alternative to regional power, the lessons of the Thatcher period cannot now be ignored. In the last three years, the local authorities on their own have been no match for a determined central government, and even more to the point have been unable to rally much popular support in their defence.

Labour may also now be wise to take account of its relative weakness, and no longer assume that it is an inevitable 'alternative government' able to treat all other political formations, Left and Centre, as enemies to be ignored or crushed. Labour too, as a potential minority party, may have an interest in acquiring some powerful regional bases, to provide a source of patronage and power to sustain its strength when it is not in national office. Without the experience of such power, parties tend to drift into sectarianism, other-worldliness, and impossibilist programmes. Occupancy of local (or regional) office provides training for party cadres, patronage for its apparatus, the opportunity to sustain support for democratic cultural forms, and a record of success in office which the party can use in its national campaigns. A significant analogy is that of postwar Italy, where the Italian Communist Party has made effective use of regional political bases (in Emilia-Romagna and Umbria for example) while so far excluded from national political office. Doubts about the prospects of central state power in Britain in the near future (leaving aside any misgivings one might have about the likelihood of the Labour Party using it effectively) might sensibly lead the Left to look into the potential advantages of power in regional and peripheral-national authorities.

From this point of view, the most significant fact about the SDP proposal is that it has been put on the table, and therefore makes more feasible a public debate on these questions. However, the mixed response this proposal received at the SDP Conference in the autumn makes it clear that no progress can be made without the mobilisation of support in the regions themselves for a real measure of devolution. The preference of many Social Democrats and Liberals for local rather than regional government power indicates in fact a difference of class interests in alignments on this issue. One might suggest that local government autonomy is most closely adapted to the democratic control of the means of collective consumption, but concentrates power insufficiently to assert control of the means of production or capital. It thus reproduces the essential strength and weakness of social democratic politics. Whereas regional government, while less 'decentralising' and democratic in its implications for local services (and this is a serious problem) could concentrate powers sufficient to make coordinated planning and substantial capital investment possible. Regional government therefore ought to make sense to those committed to a socialisation of the means of production (if only to deal with regional economic disasters) and to those managerial strata committed to more rational forms of planning in general. Unfortunately, however, the Left in the Labour Party are mostly still centralisers in their thinking, and the waverings and uncertainties in the SDP since Roy Jenkins' election as leader suggest that it is a long way from becoming a party of rational modernisation.

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**Pressure from the Left**

The attitude of most socialists to the Social Democrats is understandably one of unmitigated hostility. Enmity towards former allies (however antagonistic was the former alliance) tends to be all the greater because of former ties, and because of the bitterness which preceded separation. For these reasons even tactical cooperation with the SDP over a specific issue such as regional devolution difficult to contemplate. But from the point of view of political realism and the sanguine appreciation of class interests, there could be wider benefits, in certain circumstances, from a parallel commitment on the regional issue. If Labour failed to achieve majority support on its own, the question of its relationship with the political centre would have to be evaluated issue by issue, and if there were commonalities of interest on substantive questions, it would be sensible to recognise them. The defeat of Thatcherism and the discrediting of the politics of the Right is the highest priority at the present time, and while the Left will wish to inflect this debate in the most socialist direction that is possible, it may have to recognise that the centre parties are a lesser evil who may need to be treated with accordingly to stave off a worse one.

The Labour Party has hitherto consisted of an alliance of segments of the salaried, rationalising middle class, and the working class movement, as Gareth Stedman Jones recently reminded us[6]. The move to the right in British politics is in large part the result of the failure and collapse of this 'modernising middle class', and the formation of the SDP was one response of representatives of this class to this failure. It was, perhaps still is, possible to imagine this Social Democratic middle-class leadership being successful in recomposing a large fraction of the electorate, including many working class voters, into support for the new party. The counter-attack within the Labour Party by trade union traditionalism of the Right, and its sustenance of the remaining right wing parliamentary leadership within the Labour Party, however makes this now a very complex and fluid situation, in which 'old Labourism' appears to be staging an unexpected if limited revival. What is certain is that any left strategy must now reckon with a plurality of class interests, and the difficulty of achieving power only on the basis of Labour's traditional constituency. This has also been the lesson of the electoral successes achieved by other European socialist parties in recent years, and of the rise of the 'green' tendencies in West Germany and

[6] In an article in *New Socialist*, No 3 Jan-Feb, 1982.

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elsewhere. The internal structure of the Labour Party is not adapted to this situation, and a greater openness and plurality of representation needs to be created either within, through internal reform, or without, through proportional representation and the wider political competition that might make possible. It is argued here that a more vigorous regional and territorial dimension to socialist politics

**While the SDP brings its own specific perspectives and interests to the regional issue . . . it does not follow that there may not also be some advantage to the Left in this proposed restructuring**

would widen the political reach of the Left, and that the campaign for more regional power would focus these struggles in their necessarily locally-varied forms. It is here, as in the issues of electoral reform, that a possible coincidence of interest with various parties of the centre, both Nationalist and Alliance, might arise, both in debate about regionalism and nationalism and in some regional administrations that might, (as in Italy) eventually arise.

## FORMS OF REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS

The proposal for elected regional government advanced by the SDP Decentralisation Group, and by Labour advocates such as MacKintosh before them, is for the establishment of nine or eleven regional authorities in England, together with elected national authorities in Scotland and Wales. Various detailed suggestions have been made regarding the size and boundaries of these authorities, and this is not the place to discuss these in detail. The electoral implications of a choice of boundaries for each region are clearly crucial, for example, and would need careful study. MacKintosh's point of departure was the 1964 Labour government's economic planning regions, which were as follows:

| *Region* (or Nation) | *Population* (1967) (millions) | *Administrative centre* |
|---|---|---|
| Scotland | 5.2 | Edinburgh |
| Wales | 2.7 | Cardiff |
| Northern | 3.3 | Newcastle |
| Yorkshire & Humberside | 4.8 | Leeds |
| North West | 6.7 | Manchester |
| West Midlands | 5.0 | Birmingham |
| East Midlands | 3.3 | Nottingham |
| East Anglia | 1.6 | (London in 1965) |
| South West | 3.6 | Bristol |
| South East (incl. London) | 17.1 | London |

The main modification he proposed was the creation of three regions from the last two listed, called South West (based on Plymouth and including Devon, Cornwall, half Somerset and Dorset), South East (still a very large region including London and most of the surrounding Home Counties area), and South Central (including Bristol, Southampton, Portsmouth and Oxford).

The SDP group have proposed two further regions (making eleven English regions), one of these in the South West area of traditional Liberal strength, and one in the Thames area. This is significant given the accompanying SDP proposal for a Second Chamber in which regions would have equal weight. There are also variations in regard to the East and North Midlands, and a convincing alternative proposal for London and the South East which would treat Greater London as a region on its own (with a population of 7 million) and redistribute the surrounding Home Counties to separate regions.

photo: Steve Benbow/Network

The treatment of London and the South East is obviously a difficulty. To give this region the boundaries suggested by patterns of communication and economic coherence creates a region far more populous than the rest, and thus likely to reproduce the metropolitan dominance which regionalisation is intended to counter. On the other hand, it is difficult to construct coherent regional authorities out of the South Eastern counties exclusive of Greater London. Other problems concern Scotland and Wales which might best, as Crowther Hunt proposed, have some regional division within larger national authorities.

### Northern Ireland

One omission from the above list of possible regions is Northern Ireland. The effects of this interminable crisis on British politics, apart from the miseries it imposes on the people of Northern Ireland themselves, are such that socialists *must* address their minds to its solution. While Northern Ireland is manifestly an intractable problem all on its own, consideration would have to be given to it in any discussion of national or regional self-government. It seems to me necessary to find a form of self-government for *both* Protestant *and* Catholic communities in this province, and a debate about regional government may be an appropriate context in which to explore this. It is clear that the 'consensus' programme of attempting to wear down and outlast the IRA, while achieving agreement between majority and minority populations in Northern Ireland is doomed to failure, and that an interminable and bloody future is all that awaits present policies. It seems, more controversially, also true that the claims of neither 'nationalism' over the opposing community can be met without permanent oppression and bloodshed, whatever might be the historic or majoritarian case for undoing past wrongs.

All that is left open therefore seems to be the principle of establishing self-determining forms of government for both the Catholics and Protestants of Northern Ireland, while preventing either community obtaining unwanted jurisdiction over the other. Other interpretations of the principle of self-determination lead either to the unacceptable (and unworkable) subordination of Catholics to the Protestants of the North, or the equally unviable subordination of the Protestants to the Catholic majority of all Ireland. Separate government could be established by territorial relocation of the Catholic and Protestant populations into geographically separate areas. (Large movements of population have in any case taken place: the 1981 Census disclosed that Belfast's population had declined in ten years by one quarter). While this may seem a drastic proposal, it is less dire than unending urban guerrilla violence. It is probably

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also the outcome that would result from the open civil war should the British army ever withdraw: it might be preferable to achieve this end by civil means. An alternative means of achieving separate government would be to create Catholic and Protestant administrative districts in areas that were not all enclosed within a single geographical boundary — a kind of cantonal system. This would allow an unusual form of self-determination, and give each community control over resources and its own form of government.

With separate institutions of government, each community could be consulted over the form of relationship it wished to have with the Republic and the United Kingdom, and be able to choose. It would be possible, on this basis, to allow a very close form of relationship for the Catholic community with the Republic, if they wished it, which was not imposed on the Protestants. This would be easier to envisage if there were a geographical as well as administrative partition, but is not impossible in either case. It might be that the outcome of such a change would be two additional regional authorities within the United Kingdom, one of them with close ties in addition with the Republic.

A solution which created legitimate forms of political authority, which might include control of the police, for both communities would be likely to lead to the reduction of violence. Such authorities would each be unlikely to tolerate sources of violence alternative to their own, and would be able to establish more stable forms of bargaining and cooperation with their opposite community than can occur in the absence of locally supported authority. This proposal attempts to apply the principle of self-determination in regard to the interests of both communities, without which it is impossible to see a stable solution being attained. It is a measure of the disastrous fatalism with which this issue has become regarded for the past few years (and the intolerance and accusations of disloyalty addressed to those few who have tried to discuss it) that the issue is now scarcely discussed as a problem amenable to solution at all. The proposal for greater regional autonomy within the British state may however provide a wider and more acceptable context in which to reconsider it.

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### The powers of regional government

The powers proposed for the regions by MacKintosh, Crowther Hunt and the SDP group were primarily to be taken from national government, and from the appointed authorities like those responsible for health and water. MacKintosh's list was extensive, and included:

Regional Planning (including major communications)
Highways; Regional Transport
Housing (large scale redevelopment, overspill, new towns)
Agriculture; Forestry; Fishing
Countryside Amenities
Police; Fire Services
Water Supplies (and river pollution, flood control, main drainage)
Education (higher, further, in some cases secondary)
Refuse Disposal
Support for the Arts
Hospitals (and Preventive Medicine, General Practioner and Welfare Services)
General Competence (to do anything not prohibited by law which might be in the interests of the electors)

In addition, Crowther Hunt gave particular importance to regional economic development functions. The powers to develop Regional Enterprise Boards, economic development agencies, and investment banks would be one of the most important priorities for socialists.

Local government would clearly be profoundly affected by regional reform. MacKintosh suggested that the regional authorities should be allowed to create their own appropriate form of local government. The SDP group propose that one existing tier of local government would have to be abolished. They give greater priority than MacKintosh to the restoration of local government powers, proposing that these be exercised through funds allocated by regional authorities, rather than in a direct relationship with central government. The financial basis for these arrangements is clearly crucial: it is dependence of local government on central government grant which has provided the main lever of Thatcherite control. MacKintosh proposed a per capita and needs-related grant to regional government, together with a small local income tax. Regional authorities would be able to determine their own priorities of expenditure within this allocation. Crowther Hunt in addition proposed that regional authorities be able to finance additional expenditures within set limits, to allow some scope for reflationary economic policies within the regions without undue jeopardy to national counter-inflationary policies. The SDP proposal is to reduce the share of grant-related local government expenditure by the diversion of the proceeds of one third of income tax to the local authorities. There is an ambivalence within the SDP proposals between the aims of strengthening regional and local government, and their financial proposals seem designed to favour the latter more than the former. Socialists on the other hand should have an interest in creating regional authorities strong enough to exercise substantial economic powers, and to become agencies of public ownership in their own right.

### The Italian experience

The objective of establishing regional authorities with political

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strength might be best met by having a cabinet rather than a local government committee system, as MacKintosh proposed. This is more likely to establish a visible leadership than is usually achieved in local government (Ken Livingstone's case being exceptional) and thus enable political support to be mobilised behind their programmes. The experience of the Thatcher government shows this to be quite crucial. It would be similarly imperative for elected councillors or at least executive members to be paid. For socialists, strengthening the capacities and powers of elected politicians in this way should be one benefit from this reform. It might be realistic to recognise that such a change should be accompanied by the adoption both of proportional representation, and by a measure of state subsidy to political parties. It is hard to imagine working class parties being able to operate effectively at this additional level at their present level of resources. Proportional representation needs to be separately discussed, but a new level of government is likely to need the legitimacy it would obtain from being more fairly representative of public opinion.

There are parallels between the present emphasis of the Labour Left on a strategy of democratisation — for example in the demands for the abolition of the House of Lords, for the accountability of the police, for locally-determined public transport policies — and the potential objectives of elected regional government. Appointed executive bodies now control Health, Water, the Universities, Manpower Services and Industrial Training, and the Police. A strategy for bringing all of these under elected regional control seems more likely than separate campaigns to achieve democratic control of these services.

Regionalisation also offers advantages so far as socialist economic strategy is concerned. A renewal of commitment to public ownership was an advance of Labour policy in the 1970s — the democratic control of capital is surely the fundamental principle of socialist policy. But the unpopularity of centralised forms of nationalisation, and the weakness of Labour governments in bargaining with private corporations must be taken into account in any realistic strategy. Giving a stronger statutory basis for regional enterprise boards may be a way towards more popular interventionist programmes, especially as in some regions the priority to be given to creating employment will be locally unanswerable. Socialists in Scotland and Wales have forcefully indicated how they would wish to use such powers; one objective of these reforms is to secure Scotland and Wales the necessary autonomy.

Experience in Italy, in the regions controlled by Communist governments or Communist-led majority coalitions, seems to have been that some cooperation from small private capital can be won by working class-controlled authorities that are committed to regional economic goals, and that are in any case the permanent, efficient and legitimate administrations of their locality. One object of regional government should be to achieve class coalitions in which capital's local interests oblige it to cooperate in socialist economic programmes. In some regions, trade unions and the Labour Party would be in much weaker positions than in others: there would be no uniformity in the bargaining relationships established, just as there has been wide variation in Italy. But in a situation in which national political power for a government of the working class seems currently unattainable, in any real terms, there may nevertheless be opportunity to achieve some stronger regional hegemonies. The working class has often been disunited and disorganised by the emotions of nationalism — the Falklands factor — and even by the posing of the 'integrity of the nation' as an issue in the devolution debate. There should be an opposing strategy, which mobilises provincial interests and the attachments to specific localities as a countervailing pressure to the power of the market.

**An opening for the Left**

There is some question of whether 'regional identities' any longer exist as significant political potentialities, aside from the nationalisms of Scotland and Wales. Certainly there has been a marked decline of regional inputs into national political life. At different periods these have been from Free Trade Manchester, Social Imperialist Birmingham, Red Clydeside, and the mining communities of South Wales. Consumerism and mass communications have had their effects in dissolving regional particularity and consciousness. This metropolitan domination seems on the whole now to be a conservative force, sucking initiative and ability out of the provinces and absorbing it in the large-scale operations of modern capital, which includes the cultural institutions of broadcasting, the national press, and the subsidised national theatre companies. The opportunity to stimulate local and regional culture, and develop diversity of educational and cultural provision[7], should be one advantage of regional government, enabling socialists in some places to attempt on a larger scale what has been falteringly attempted through municipal programmes. Socialist historians might be able to make some contribution to such cultural regeneration. It may be more feasible to argue on a regional basis for democratic control and open access to the mass media, than it appears to be on a national basis, where socialists have achieved little against the ideological defences of liberalism and the market. Of course, much 'regionalism' will be parochial and even conservative; this is already the case with parts of the nationalist movements, as socialists who support them make clear. But society is too complex to expect or insist on uniform patterns of culture, and the diversity which increased regional autonomy might make possible should be accepted as beneficial, and as providing a more open environment in which socialists can assert their own positions.

The case for a stronger regional and territorial dimension to the politics of the Left is argued here not merely in terms of desirable policies for the reform of government. What is proposed is essentially a programme of mobilisation, which might enable discontents and political hopes to be expressed in a more meaningful and locally-rooted way. While there have to be tangible objectives for such territorially-based campaigns (the transfer of significant powers from irresponsible state agencies and departments, and the acquisition of substantial economic and planning powers over the private sector are critical), the campaigns in different regions must generate their own identity and objectives if they are to have any effect. The Greater London and South Yorkshire councils have demonstrated the potential of what are in effect regionally-based councils to mobilise more interest and support than local government had previously done in Britain for many years, and their public transport policies are examples of distinctive socialist goals for regional government. These examples need to be broadened into a much wider regional strategy. If different parties and elements of the Left were able to cooperate in developing 'alternative regional plans' they might be able to create some more representative and broad-based participation in a campaign for a new politics that could defeat Thatcherism. □

What is proposed is essentially a programme of mobilisation

[7] I have argued a case for the regional control of institutions of post-18 education in a Socialist Society pamphlet, *Comprehensive Education after 18* (1982). A forthcoming article in *New Left Review* on 'A Statutory Right to Work' also suggests that regional economic authorities might have major responsibilities for employment creation.

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'He [Nakasone] is clearly distrusted and disliked by many Japanese contemporaries, who see him as excessively ambitious . . . Personable, intelligent, and self-assured, Nakasone strikes one as the type of leader who might be called on in the event of a crisis but who in normal times is likely to generate too many enemies to be acceptable as a leader.' (Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Fragile Blossom*, 1972, p27)

If Brzezinski is right, why has Nakasone now become Japan's new prime minister? Does it mean that there really is a crisis? Has Nakasone undergone a personality change? Or have his enemies, perhaps, become weaker?

The *Financial Times* noted that 'this was a succession of power determined not only without reference to external relations but even without real debate on domestic issues.' (November 26, 1982). Regrettably, this lack of reference within Japan to external issues was matched externally by considerable nonchalance and even neglect towards this major event: the advent to power of the most able and determined hawkish nationalist in Japanese politics. On the weekend following his election-appointment, not one of the three leading Sunday papers in Britain bothered to profile him or even describe his advent to power. Japan may be a long way away, but why does the second most important capitalist economy, a key trading rival and a rising military power get such short shrift?

At 64, Yasuhiro Nakasone is one of the youngest postwar premiers in Japan. He reached this position after both the unexpected resignation of his predecessor, the lacklustre Zenko Suzuki, on October 12, 1982, and via a hitherto unused two-tier electoral process within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (which the *Times*, in an interesting lapse, referred to as the 'Imperial Democratic Party' on November 25, 1982). The LDP has an absolute majority in the Diet (Parliament) and, given the weakness of the opposition, governmental politics is essentially coterminous with the internal politics of the ruling party.

### The Tanaka factor

Both the resignation of Suzuki and the accession of Nakasone were determined as much by invisible and murky pressures within the LDP as by external economic or political factors. By far the biggest single faction in the LDP is controlled by the former premier Kakuei Tanaka, who is not even a member of the party. Tanaka has been on trial for the past three years on charges of bribery and corruption in connection with the Lockhead scandal and a judgement is expected in mid-

Jon Halliday

# Mr Weathervane takes over in Japan

1983. It is very hard for an outside observer to situate this scandal and its political effects with precision. On the one hand, it was the biggest scandal to rock Japan since the war; it led to Tanaka having to resign the premiership in 1974 and to his arrest in 1976. On the other hand, it is widely accepted in Japan that politics is mainly (often entirely) a matter of bribery and corruption; the press regularly publish estimates of the sums of money passed round in both party and national elections.

Tanaka, though formally ousted, continues to be the most powerful politician in the country — and even in the party of which he is no longer a member, although everyone knows why he cannot be a member and that his non-membership is a complete formality. Even if he were to be condemned and sent to jail (where he has been already) it is unlikely that this would affect his standing much, either in the LDP or in the country at large. Several of his key associates have been convicted. Others hold prominent positions in Nakasone's cabinet, which in some ways is a Tanaka cabinet without Tanaka (or, perhaps, rather without Tanaka in any formal post).

Nakasone himself has had a career which matches the mood and interest of the shadowy right wing forces which are gradually re-establishing their control over Japanese life behind the facade of formal democracy. Nakasone started his career as an officer in the Imperial Navy (1941-45), where he was a member of one of the two most bellicose factions (the 'Strike North' — ie, against the USSR — faction). After the surrender he became a police official before entering the Diet in 1947. He first came to prominence as a leader of the very first attempts within the Diet publicly to revise the new US-imposed Constitution, which enshrined sovereignty in the people rather than the Emperor, and which committed Japan to a policy of peace, including a total ban on any armed forces. As early as November 1953 Nakasone was urging that the Constitution be revised and this is sure to form a central part of his governmental programme.

He first came to international attention as the head of the Self-Defence Agency (ie, Minister of Defence) in the early 1970s. During this period he was one of the first people in such a position to suggest that Japan might acquire nuclear power for military purposes and he also floated the idea of a 'defence periphery' extending well beyond the shores of Japan which, at a minimum, would include Korea, which he referred to then as Japan's 'advance stronghold'. Nakasone subsequently held other important jobs, including Minister of International Trade and Industry (MITI), chairman of the LDP Executive Board and Secretary General of the LDP. Concurrent with some of these posts, he was Governor of Takushoku (literally 'Colonization') University, with some 10,000 students, which he used as a base for instilling nationalist ideas into the young, and which was controlled internally by gangs of thugs and right wing athletic groups.

### Mr Weathervane

Nakasone has earned himself the nickname of 'Mr Weathervane' or 'Mr Weathercock'. The implication of this being that he is an opportunist, which he certainly is. But such stress on his opportunism, along with ideas that Japanese politics somehow operates according to consensus (which is not true), risks obscuring the much more important fact that he is a diligent activist who can be expected to move Japan significantly to the right, both internally and externally (unless, of course, something is done about it, which seems unlikely). Likewise, while it is quite correct to emphasise that he is to some extent the creature of Tanaka, the 'shogun in the darkness', Nakasone also has his own autonomous record of conservative positions, going right back to the period immediately after the restoration of full independence in 1952. Although Nakasone may be almost as corrupt as Tanaka, it is probably misleading to think of him as equally opportunist. In fact, he is probably *less* of an opportunist and more of a genuine right wing nationalist. His nearest European

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homologue would be Franz-Josef Strauss, who in many ways could be considered a moderate compared with Nakasone.

Nakasone takes office not just in the middle of a world recession (including a dead halt to the growth of world trade), but at a time when there are very strong new pressures on Japan to accelerate rearmament. These are the two areas in which the Nakasone government's actions will most be felt by the rest of the world.

**Rearmament**

First, rearmament. In 1970 Nakasone, then head of the Self-Defence Agency, said that in a military sense Japan 'can be viewed as a rabbit with long ears plus the defences of a porcupine' (ie, powerful intelligence plus good home defence). But the Reagan administration and powerful forces inside Japan do not consider this enough. As so often, fact and fiction are mixed up — by both the Tokyo regime and the Reagan-Weinberger administration — and some clarification is in order.

At present Japan has total armed forces of some 240,000 men (approximately three-fifths land army, and one-fifth each in the navy and air force). Current (pre-Nakasone) plans called for the army to add about 25,000 men by 1984, the navy 3,600 and the air force about 1,800. In sheer numbers, this is not a huge military and there are no current plans to expand it on a major scale in numbers of personnel. However, there is a very large number of officers and non-commissioned officers (nearly 70% of the land army, according to Soviet sources). And in terms of technology, it is extremely sophisticated. It is, basically, a high technology, low quantity (of personnel) military force, with special emphasis on an advanced navy and air force.

The Japanese government claims that it spends only 0.9% of GNP on military expenses and that this therefore places it in a category far below that of other major capitalist countries. This claim needs to be unpacked. On the one hand, it *is* true that relative to GNP Japan's defence expenditure is low compared with that of the NATO countries. But it is not true that Japan's armed forces are therefore somehow 'inadequate'. In the first place, Japan computes its military expenditure by wholly idiosyncratic criteria which are not used in other countries. If NATO criteria are used, then Japan's military expenditure comes out at 1.5% of GNP (about US$20 billion in 1982); and even this understates the true amount, since sizeable expenditures on new weapons systems are hidden in other parts of the budget (a practice not confined to Japan). The development of rocket boosters, for example, comes under the education budget because the work is being carried out at Tokyo University. But, secondly, what would be the point — and the effect — of Japan greatly increasing its military spending?

The US claims that Japan has been getting 'a free ride' from the US and wants Japan to increase spending by about 15% per annum. A prominent Chinese official has called for Japan to double its military spending. Current increases are slightly over 7% pa. Right wing Japanese meet the 'free ride' argument by pointing out that the USA cannot be relied on as an ally since it 'gave up' in Vietnam, as well as pointing to Japan's (rising) unpopularity with large sections of the United States, a factor which might become acute. Some Western officials have recently begun to worry aloud that Japan might 'go Asian' (ie, form an alliance with China).

**US-Japan relations**

Up till now the US has kept a virtually exclusive hold on military relations with Japan. There are at least three very strong reasons for this. First, memories of Pearl Harbor and Japanese brutality during the Pacific War make it necessary for any US administration to be able to demonstrate to its own people that Japan is not 'out of control'. Second, the USA has to be able to show its other allies in East Asia (South Korea, Philippines, etc) who suffered greatly under the Japanese that it has Tokyo well in hand. And third, the US wants to ensure (and so far has) that within the Trilateral group (USA, EEC, Japan) relations are kept *bilateral* — ie, that the US has strong ties with Japan and with the EEC, but that EEC-Japan ties are not of nearly commensurate strength. Military muscle (including an atomic 'umbrella') has been the main means to achieve this political goal.

The dual objective of perpetuating US control over the Japanese military and accommodating rising nationalist sentiment in Japan is being met by new plans to increase Japan's military range. The US has asked Japan to take over responsibility for patrolling an area 1,000 nautical miles from Japan. Within this radius lie parts of the Soviet Far East and Northeast China and the whole of Korea (North and South). After vigorous protests from the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries, it was made clear that Japanese 'responsibility' does not cover any of the ASEAN countries' territories, but it does extend as far as Guam, to the East, and covers the sea lanes running between Japan and the Philippines and Japan and Taiwan.

**School textbooks**

To some extent the discussion about Japan's re-militarisation has been conducted in confused and confusing terms. Often it has been couched in terms of revising the Constitution. But the main fact is that the postwar Constitution does not just impose a ceiling on the armed forces or ban them being sent abroad. *It explicitly bans Japan having any armed forces at all for ever.* Critics on the left have sometimes been accused of crying wolf about re-militarisation. The point is not that Japan is necessarily about to launch an armed attack on its neighbours. Rather, increased defence expenditure and extended patrolling of the oceans will bolster Japan's ability to back up its already great economic muscle and exert more pressure on neighbours who are already weaker than it. Discussion of Japan's expenditure in terms of a low percentage of GNP masks the fact that its military budget is already the sixth or seventh largest in the world and its armed forces are already, in terms of conventional forces, qualitatively stronger than those of its neighbours.

Furthermore, the heightened Reagan-Weinberger pressure coincides with worrying manifestations of right wing resurgence inside Japan. The most clamorous of these was the Japanese government's authorisation of revisions to the school textbooks which radically (and in a blatantly mendacious way) downplayed or excised mention of Japan's aggression and cruelty against many countries in Asia up till 1945. Among the revisions was one referring to the assault on China in 1937 as an 'advance'; the forcible deportation of Korean workers became a 'voluntary act'. Almost as disturbing as the changes themselves was the government's reactions to protests. At first, Tokyo did nothing. Only under tremendous pressure from China and South Korea in particular did it agree to envisage changes. But it limited revision of the revisions to countries which had exercised enough pressure. So far it has not even announced reconsideration of equally offensive passages referring to other countries which have not been able to apply the same kind of pressure. Rather as when the US was forcing through the Peace Treaty with Japan in the early 1950s, Washington is now again, in effect, having to go guarantor for Japan's good behaviour *vis-à-vis* its own allies in East Asia. This group may now, to some extent, even include China, which appears to be re-thinking its endorsement of Japan's re-militarisation and the role of the US-Japan Security Treaty (parallel with some re-thinking of relations with the USSR).

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**Economic questions**

The question of re-militarisation and higher military expenditure also directly relates to two major economic questions. One concerns the role of state spending and Keynesianism. The other the relationship between an advanced military machine and high technology.

It is generally accepted that relatively low military spending, along with very low expenditure on social services, has been central to Japan's high postwar growth. Japan, in effect, missed out on Keynesianism. The question now is whether Japan is more likely to recover (relatively) high growth by continuing the postwar policy of low state expenditure, or whether, having missed out on a Keynesian phase, it could now practice 'Keynesianism in one country' and stimulate domestic growth via higher government spending. In abstract, the latter route would appear possible. But it is probably blocked by a combination of factors specific to Japan. For domestic electoral reasons, the LDP appears unable to raise taxes (which are, overall, very low in Japan). The budget deficit is already the highest, proportionately, of any major OECD country and deficit financing is becoming increasingly difficult.

The second major issue is the relationship between advanced technology and military expenditure. There has not yet (to my knowledge) been a case in the modern world of a state which was an economic leader without a large and advanced military sector. Even the smaller capitalist economies which produce advanced industrial equipment, such as Sweden and Switzerland, have a sophisticated arms sector. Japan is already the leading economy in many fields of technology and electronics and is making a determined push to catch up with and overtake the US in computers.

The only sector in which Japan conspicuously lags is aerospace. The sectors which the Japanese government has targeted as those for special attention and high growth in the forthcoming period — computers, semi-conductors, lasers, new alloys and electronics — are all closely military-related. The Japanese aviation industry, which makes many of its products under licence from US firms, already sells 85% of its output to the Defence Agency. The (understandable) emphasis on developing 'knowledge-intensive' industries contains within it a very strong impetus in the direction of militarisation. It is hard to see how Japan can continue to take the lead in high technology without this leading to the development of much more military-related products. And, along with this, the worrying question is what Japan will do with it all. Japan has a relatively restricted domestic market; it is surrounded by hyper-militarised regimes, especially those in Korea and Taiwan, but also in ASEAN. The logic of such a development must be to make Japan into a major arms exporter and to increase the role of the military-industrial complex within Japan.

A move in such direction seems only likely to be encouraged by continuing stagnation in world trade. Contrary to widespread myth, Japan is not a major exporter relative to the size of its GNP (compared to the EEC countries, say). But its economy has been geared to the expectation of rising GNP and rising exports. To some extent, the accusation that Japan has benefited by combining the advantages of free trade at the world level with protectionism at home was true for much of the postwar period. But the less obvious aspects of Japan's relatively low integration into the world economy was the low level of internationalisation of the society as well as the economy. To a large extent the Japanese bourgeoisie liked things this way. But perhaps the time has come when the rest of the world should pay a bit more attention to what is going on inside Japan itself.

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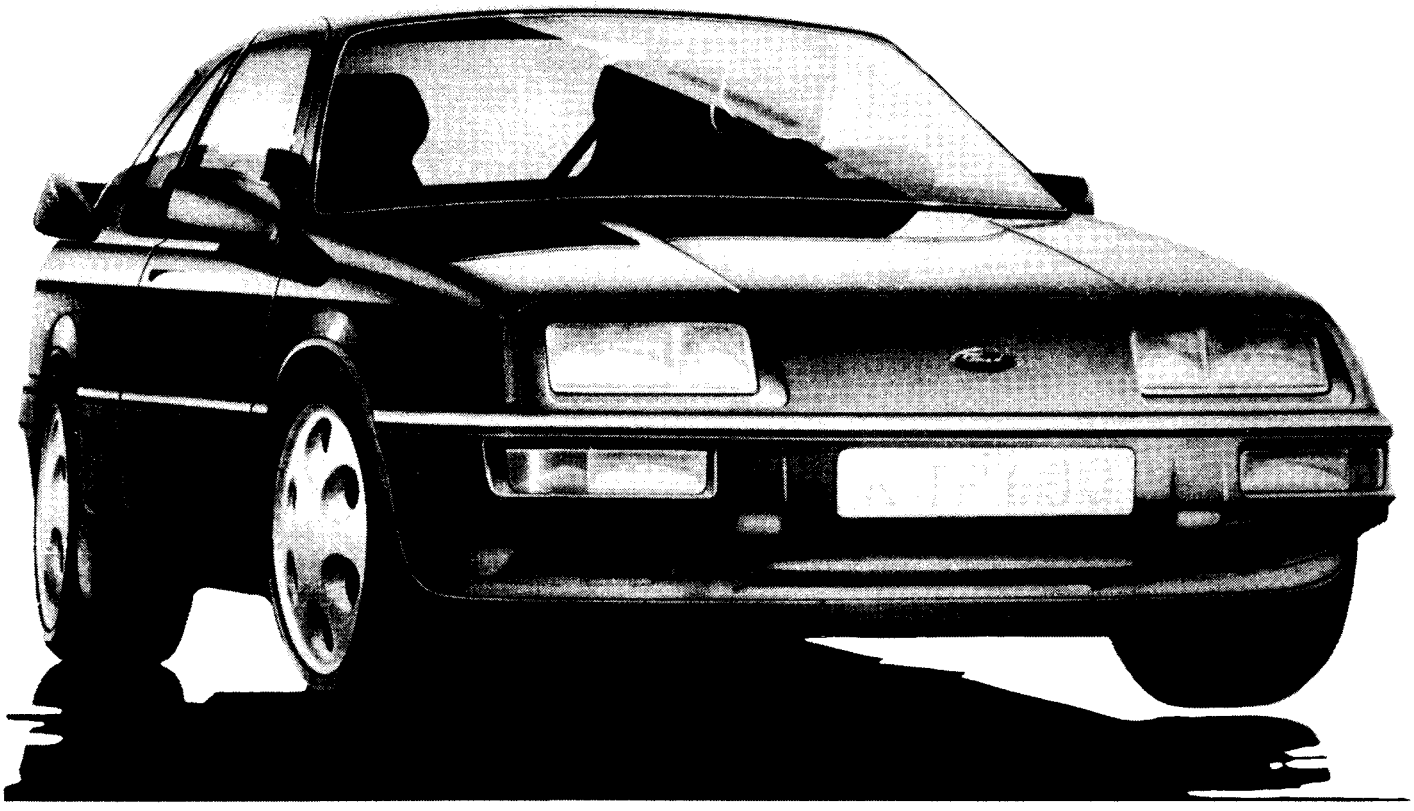
# SIERRA DESIGN

## Interview with Dan Connor



**The Sierra has been acclaimed as a major achievement in design technology. It is being publicised as both a family car and a 'car for the open road'. Last year a new gallery — The Boilerhouse — was opened at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Founded by the designer Terence Conran, the Boilerhouse will examine industrial design in this country. One of the first exhibitions looked at how the Design Division at Ford came to approve the new model and the thinking behind their decision. Here Dan Connor, convenor at Ford Body Plant (Dagenham) talks to Richard Hill and Sally Townsend about the design of the Sierra, the effects the new model has had on production, and about the problem of having exhibitions of this sort dealing with industrial design.**

*Firstly, what's your impression as you enter the gallery on seeing the Sierra next to all the different Victorian art objects?*

I think it's totally incongruous in that sort of background although I suppose they would argue that it's a new art form, but my personal view is that it's a free show — free advertising, and I bet other manufacturers are kicking themselves that they didn't think of that first. I suppose the next thing is that we'll have a painting of a Vauxhall Cavalier in the National Gallery.

*Does the Sierra differ that much from the other equivalent new models?*

I think that the cars now are all basically designed in the same way — they use the same techniques — they are becoming more and more alike. The exhibition could probably have been done by any other motor manufacturer: Vauxhall probably take the same care with their models as do Ford or BL. This is a very cheap form of advertising for Ford, it creates the impression that they are the possessor of some special science; they have the actual witchdoctor that no other manufacturer has. The whole question of car advertising seems to take your mind off what's going on under the surface.

*This exhibition is purely about the design of the car, not about the way it is produced. Have there been noticeable changes in the production of the Sierra compared with previous models?*

They've had to design a model which is cheaper to run. Ecological reasons and the cost of oil have led to these changes. They weren't prepared to make major design and engine changes, which would have been

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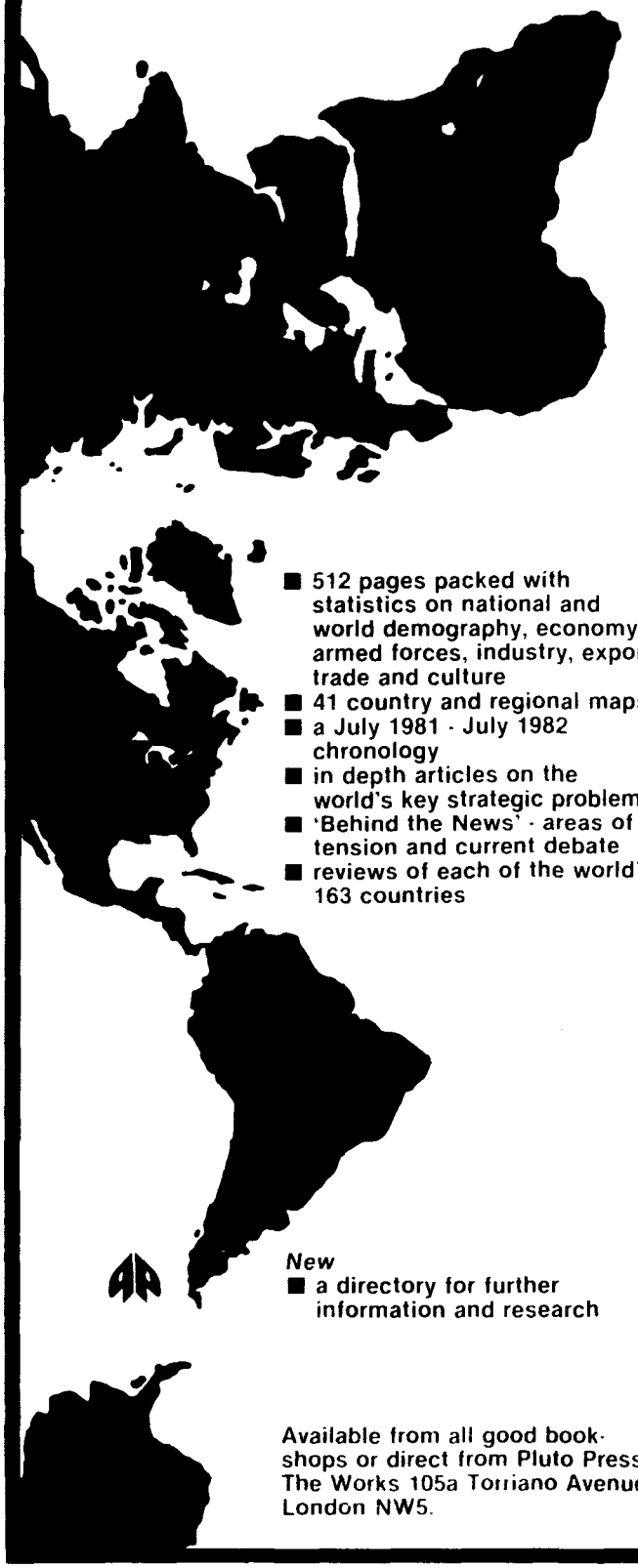

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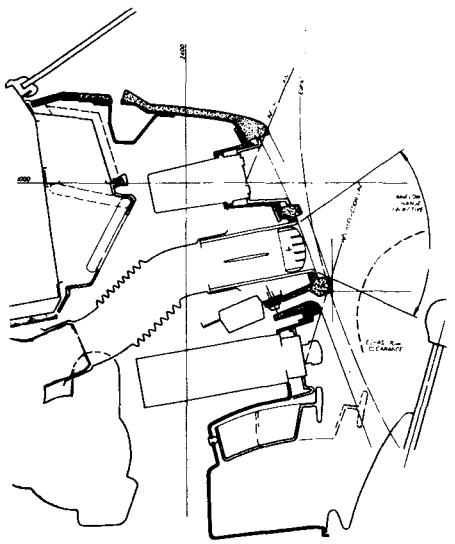
very expensive on top of what they've invested in the building of a new and aerodynamically more efficient body. That, of course, will result in some improvement in performance — both in maximum speed and in fuel consumption — but basically there's very little difference in the design of the engine. In the manufacture of the body, however, there have been dramatic changes resulting in massive surpluses of labour. The amount of labour required to produce a body shell has been dramatically reduced by the installation of automatic press lines. Previously it would have required maybe 10,15 or 20 men to make a body side, now this is effectively done by four with half-a-dozen massive thousand-ton presses. And this means not only a reduction in the amount of labour engaged in assembly, but also in services that that labour requires: tea breaks, canteens, toilet facilities, time keepers, people to make up the wages — all those are not necessary with a robot. It's all these indirect contributions to labour that are going to be the massive savings in my opinion.

*How efficiently is the new machinery working at the moment on the Sierra. Are there lots of breakdowns?*

I think there are less breakdowns, though there's a lack of experience in the programme of the robots. But slowly problems will be eradicated. So we're reaching forward. At the moment there are difficulties, as I say. It's a totally new concept of having maybe 130 automatic robots working away, but nonetheless I don't doubt that given a very brief period — a few months — and the teething problems will be eradicated.

*Do they use robots on the later stages of the line to instal the trim and the finishings?*

They haven't been able to do that. If you take the inside of a car, the roof part of it (known as the headline) was previously some sort of cloth or plastic which would be stuck into place with adhesive and tacks. We now have the whole piece moulded. That's a total plastic moulding which fits in and therefore obviates the need for a lot of labour. The spraying of the car body wasn't the most congenial of jobs and they're now able to programme robots so that they can differentiate which motor is coming and the colour necessary for that car. The robot now effectively sprays the model and that's resulted in a fairly drastic cut in the number of sprayers. It hasn't been possible to use robots in the



other bits and pieces that go on to a car — the fitting of doors and the fitting of the trim — and it probably isn't worth their while anyway while labour is at the price it is. Even compared with Japanese labour, incidentally, our labour is much cheaper.

*When you get a new model coming through, does it make a big difference for those working on the line?*

I think it would be right to say that on this particular model there is a different mood about because of the current problems we've got in the industry. At the same time Ford are constantly threatening us with what their continental workers do. That they stand on their hands and apparently use half-a-dozen tools simultaneously. We have to take account of this. I think there's a recognition that maybe some of our past practices need to be reconsidered. That's the reality of the world we live in. It's very important to mention the impact of the multinationals on the individual labour force. Ford not only compare the Belgium worker with the British worker, they also use this argument against the German worker and the Spanish worker where they produce a model simultaneously in two or more countries, as they do the Fiesta in Saarlouis and Valencia for example.

*Was there any consultation with the workforce over the design or safety on the Sierra before you were told this was what you were going to make?*

Once the high level decisions are taken about the shape of the thing, and the tool design is on the way, we are then told at the local level what the layout is going to be, where certain jobs are going to be, where the gangways are going . . . We are really brought in at the end of the design to do a bit of fine tuning. We can't change the major direction of the plan. Once we know that the layout of the job is we can then look into safety measures like the question of noise or fumes. We can raise these but only at that level.

Let me give you an example here though. We have some jobs where we use a pneumatic hammer on the car body. It is extremely noisy and the vibration is very very serious and can cause 'dead hand'. If you're going to have robots in the factory why not have them do that job — the noisy dangerous job. I raised this about four months ago but we still haven't got robots doing this job. So really the design people at the top have got their ideas but don't take into account the experience of people on the floor. If you've got robots they should certainly be used on the most dangerous jobs.

*If the V & A let you have The Boilerhouse to hold an exhibition about the Sierra, how would you do it differently from the way it's been done here?*

If I had the opportunity to stage an exhibition about the Sierra I would certainly like to hold it in a Ford factory at Dagenham and let the public know just how a motor car is made. It is very fascinating seeing on the television Fiat and all that — these robots clipping away very happily under all sorts of circumstances. I want you to realise that they have an insatiable appetite these things — wet, cold, dry, it doesn't matter — they just keep plugging away, day after day, hour after hour.

*Do you think it is possible to have an exhibition on the design of an industrial product which is not just an advertising gimmick?*

I think it's very valid and there's a need for more of this type of exhibition. Maybe had we done it in this country twenty years ago a lot of our stuff wouldn't be as outdated and badly designed as it is now. We've tended, in this country, to talk about the nuts and bolts of things. We've not really refined our design technique. I think to that degree all consumer products should be open for discussion and attention. That would include, for example, 'what is the purpose of the car in society', 'What sort of car do we want?' The one thing they haven't done with this

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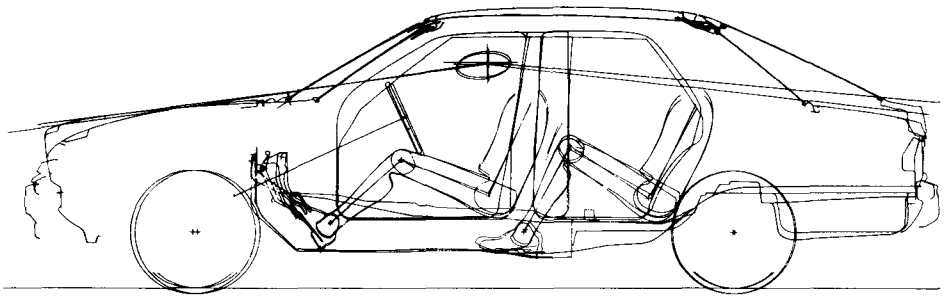
# Channel Five



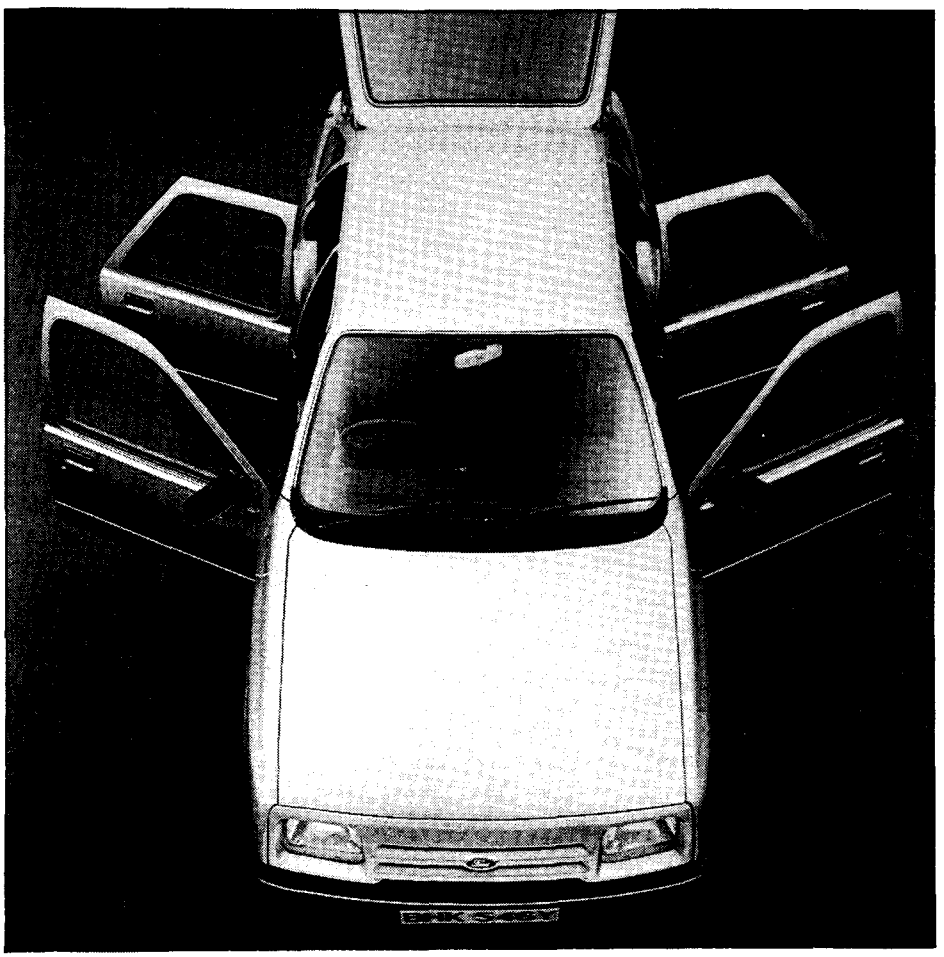


photo: Boilerhouse Project

car ismake it more durable than the models of twenty years ago. By changing the shape of cars you immediately date other models. The most significant thing about the Sierra if you look at the shape and design of it is the aerodynamics which make every other model look out of date. The design of clothing is very much based upon that sort of thing. By setting a new style every year everyone has to throw away all their old clothes.

*I take your point about obsolescence and the fact that cars aren't designed to last a long time but they do wear out and you have got to design new types of cars. In the process of doing that, you might as well take some pains to design something which is attractive by the standards of the time.*

I agree with you that you can't neglect the design but once you've got a good aerodynamic shape there isn't too much you can do with it. Once you start adding wings on motor car you are just doing it for decorative effects. Most of the design features today are not for aesthetic features — it really is about trying to do Nissan down or General Motors — that seems to be the motivating force behind it all.

Ford has never really been an innovator. Ford has traditionally produced rather conservative cars — at least in design terms. They never have installed anything that's absolutely new. They've always built upon well-established principles. That has been their hallmark. It does have the advantage for the consumer that when a model goes on the road, it is well and truly tested and has a good back-up service. Ford have not gone for gimmicks. Their models have traditionally been a bit middle-of-the-road, but nonetheless reliable and based on well-worn theories.

*Is that reflected in the way that Fords operate as a factory — that there's more attention to detail?*

Certainly the quality levels that are expected now on the body finish and detailed work is much higher than on any previous model and that's a fact. I don't think this is in order to give the customer a good deal. I don't think it's anything about that at all. Rather, the customer is very critical nowadays so what we'd rather do is wipe out the minor problems at source. But, of course, as far as the customer is concerned the end product is a very well-tested model — that's got to be said. At the same time, the slightest defect, nowadays leads to immense pressure on the lad on the floor: there is a much harder atmosphere in this repect. □

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**SONGS OF RESISTANCE**

## GIL SCOTT-HERON

Mary Ellison

We're gonna take this world through changes
not the other way around.
See the world is slowly rearranging
can't nobody stop us now
It's the Third World Revolution
and we're standing at the gate
You can add to the solution
while the world is changing shape.

Gil Scott-Heron is a young black American singer, poet and musician who articulates with unusual persistence the need for a radical transformation of most Western political, social and economic systems. His songs mirror the causes that Manning Marable (*From the Grassroots*) sees sparking off revolt — 'unemployment and economic

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photo: Geffen Records

*Gil Scott-Heron*

underdevelopment, police brutality, a racist legal system, and a heritage of social and cultural prejudice aimed against all black people'.

Black Americans have created a unique body of music that has not only reflected their struggle but sometimes catalysed their activism. The rebellion inherent in the music is rooted in the blues that refused to gloss over poverty-stricken lives and repressive circumstances. Songs like Robert Johnson's *Hellhound on my Trail* and Johnny Shires', *Tom Green's Farm*, showed the horror of life as it was just as Bessie Smith expressed class inequality during the 20s in, *Poor Man's Blues*:

> Mr rich man, rich man, open your heart and mind
> Give a poor man a chance and stop these hard, hard times
> While you livin' in your mansion, you don't know what hard time mean
> While poor working man's wife is starvin', your wife is livin' like a queen.

On a recent album Gil Scott-Heron sings of the:

> Sister in the welfare bind
> examining the threads of her life
> Never thought she'd be cheating and lying
> to make sure her and her kids survive
> Waiting for the axe to fall.

Such a situation is hardly new and bluesmen had complained in the New Deal period of similar mistreatment:

> Now, you go to your workhouse, put in your complaint,
> Nine times out of ten, you know,
> They'll say, 'I can't'
>
> . . .
>
> They don't want to give you no dough,
> Won't hardly pay your rent,
> And it ain't costin' them
> One doggone cent
>
> (Carl Martin, *Let's Have a New Deal)*

Several decades later, in the early 70s, Marvin Gaye had exposed the exploitation of ghetto life with brilliant insight in *What's Going On* and *Inner City Blues* and his embittered vision was reinforced by Stevie Wonder's *Living For The City*. The logical, startling extension of these views was reached in Sly Stone's *There's a riot goin' on*. A record that challenged oppression so directly that it became an act of rebellion. Menacing music was interlocked with some of the most eerie and perfectly developed lyrics in rock music to create a sound that threatened to change the very shape of the relationships that existed between black and white and rich and poor. *Riot* urged action as inevitable:

> Lookin' at the devil
> Grinnin' at his gun,
> Fingers start shakin',
> I began to run
>
> Bullets start chasin',
> I begin to stop.
> We begin to wrestle,
> I was on the top.
>
> (Sly Stone, *Thank You For Talkin' to me Africa)*

A few years later the Isley Brothers were to be even more explicit in their advocation of violence in songs such as *Go For Your Guns*.

Few blacks have ever had much faith in the ability of mainstream politics to give them a fair deal. Gil Scott-Heron denounces the paucity of a political system that elected presidents like Gerald Ford who

> Has declared himself at odds with people
> on welfare . . . people who get food stamps,
> day care children, the elderly, the poor,
> women and
> people who might vote for Ronald Reagan.
> Ronald Reagan — It got by him. Hollyweird!
>
> Acted like an actor
> acted like a liberal
> acted like General Franco, when he acted like
> Governor of California.
> Now he acts like somebody might vote for him for President.

photo: CBS Records

*Marvin Gaye*

He reinforced this view when interviewed in London last April. He emphasised that general disillusionment with the American political system was beginning to set in: 'after all, over half the registered voters did not vote in the last election'. He drove home the illogicality of a situation where one man is supposed to represent the complex interests of a vast territory: 'you can't just come from one place and say that's what's going to be doin' it for everybody in a country of that size with that many diverse interests.' He stressed the inherent emptiness of political aspirations of this kind — 'as you go higher in politics you have to sell little pieces of yourself and by the time you get to the top, there's nothing left.' It is an emptiness that he had already commented on in songs:

> You can depend on politicians
> 'cause they always got a point of view
> They are contemporary court magicians
> Sleight of mouth will dazzle you.
> You can depend on a bad position from them
> (But) don't depend on the train from Washington
> it's 100 years overdue.

Promises had continuously been broken since the time when emancipation failed to deliver freedom, and more recently 'sleight of mouth' was diverting attention from the discrimination within America to oppressive foreign policy. But to Gil Scott-Heron the subterfuge had not worked. The youth of America are the people who are not fooled and they condemn activities in El Salvador

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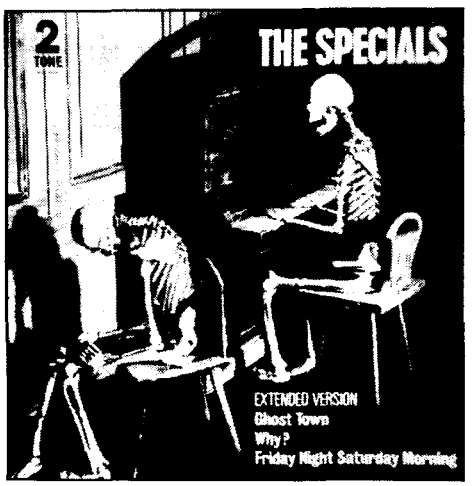
# Channel Five

just as they did the Vietnam war. Earlier blues singers had been just as cynical about previous presidents and past wars.

Young people are beginning, believes Gil Scott-Heron, to be equally open in their condemnation of racism and inequality at home. Blacks and whites of their generation went to school together and grew up playing ball together and have become less alienated from each other than any other previous generation. Simple contact has reduced the fears that used to divide black from white to tensions of more manageable proportions. Social proximity and daily communication has eroded prejudice and begun to undermine non-institutional discrimination. Young whites now understand blacks better as human beings and rejection has given way to emulation — 'They walk like us now, they talk like us, they dance like us — because they have come to understand and appreciate us.'

Echoes of his views resonate through the songs and mood of the two-tone British bands. *Ghost Town* by The Specials summed up brilliantly the spirit of unemployed and angry black and white youths, while the music and lyrics of The Beat and UB40 are both radical and fun. Even the




deeply black rooted songs of Linton Kwesi Johnson see class as more important than race. They reject the capitalist theories that 'put profit before people' and substitute automation for employment. Gil Scott-Heron sees young people rejecting a system that designs industrial complexes that function with a minimal number of people. He sees them propelling a reluctant America and the world towards a different and more egalitarian society which will reject the inherently decadent inequities of the present system. His symbiosis with the views of articulate spokesmen for the third world is affirmed by the dynamic anti-capitalist songs of Fela Kuti in Africa and Bob Marley in the West Indies.

How successful this is likely to be Gill Scott-Heron confronts with a determination and optimism remarkably similar to that of Manning Marable:

> 'Can we achieve real equality for all people, in every aspect of economic, social and political relations? As we destroy the economic illusions of US society, the crisis of equality looks the great unresolved riddle for democracy in the US. For the sake of our children and for the future of the world, we must address the problem and master it, without uprooting the best of black cultural and social traditions which were created during the former period of segregation and inequality. We must resolve ourselves to struggle for the basic principles of fairness and equality for all people.' (Marable, *From the Grassroots*)

Is all this possible? Gil Scott-Heron believes so and hopes his songs can contribute towards change. He believes that 'I am a part of something that can be constructive out of all the destructive things that are around.' □

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Discussion

# The Unions: caught on the ebb tide

Bill Warman

Communists have always had the responsibility of making clear their ideas on the role and character of the labour movement, and in particular the trade unions. In doing so, men like Marx, Engels, Lenin and Pollitt have not hesitated to be quite sharp in their language when they thought it was needed, and forthright in proposing the changes that they felt were necessary to bring about a strong, determined fight for the future working class and the winning of socialism.

However, Tony Lane's article in the September issue, couched as it is in general terms, conveys a feeling of defeatism, a lack of confidence in the men and women in the trade unions and a paternalistic 'talking down' to the working class.

**Country versus town**

The impression given of the transition of industry from town to country is that it is a very recent development. Nothing is farther from the truth.

During the 1930s, as an unemployed worker, forced by the means test to live on my parents' meagre income, I travelled from London to the Morris Oxford, Cowley, factory, then well out in the country. The place was non-union, like the majority of factories in Oxford at that time. I had a rough time as did other trade unionists, and eventually I had a row with the authorities and was sacked. This same factory later became highly organised and has remained so to the present day. Numerous such examples can be quoted from my trade union activities.

As for the cities, Tony Lane refers to the establishment of quarterly meetings of shop stewards by the AEU in the 1930s. This was an important step forward for that union at the time. However, there was much to do in industry then to take this step towards establishing greater unity in the workshops. The AEU leadership, like most of the engineering unions, was against joint shop stewards committees (JSSC). Each union pursued its own line in the factories, and it was the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions which carried out the negotiations for all the unions in engineering with the exception of the AEU which continued to remain outside the Confederation until the 2nd World War.

Campaigning by the militants in the unions for JSSCs finally broke this down. Communists played a major part in these campaigns. This is an example of the way we should be prepared to bring about improvements and changes in trade union structure. It also shows the advances made during the past fifty years, from which it is possible to make further progress.

Referring to the organisation of new sections eg, health workers, council employees etc, it seems to me that Tony Lane very much underestimates the importance of these developments. True, they may not have the same muscle as the miners or electricians have, but they are very important allies for trade unionism, helping to give the lie to press campaigns by Tories, SDP, Liberals and some right wing Labourites on the unpopularity of the trade unions. The tremendous solidarity actions that have taken place around the health workers' dispute constitute a very high level of trade union achievement. Leadership by the TUC on this issue has been in advance of any previous action for many decades. It is a pity that a similar stand was not taken on the ASLEF dispute.

**Incomes policy**

Whenever I hear of incomes policies for the trade unions, I am reminded of the famous reply of Marx in *Wage Labour and Capital* to Citizen Weston:

> 'Citizen Weston illustrated his theory by telling you that when a bowl contains a certain quantity of soup, to be eaten by a certain number of persons, an increase in the broadness of the spoons would produce no increase in the amount of the soup. He must allow me to find this illustration rather spoony . . . Citizen Weston, on his part, has forgotten that the bowl from which the workmen eat is filled with the whole produce of the national labour, and what prevents them from fetching more out of it is neither the narrowness of the bowl nor the scantiness of its contents, but only the smallness of their spoons.'

Any incomes policy that is designed to rob Peter to pay Paul is sure to fail and can only succeed under capitalist economics in setting worker against worker. Under socialism, the picture would be different, but it is naive to think that a fair and equable wages policy is possible under capitalism. That does not exclude the steps being taken in many engineering establishments to reduce ridiculous differentials between workers on the shop floor. For example, in some Coventry factories 80 different rates were reduced by negotiation to six or eight, by agreement between the JSSC and the workers. Such agreements are a very different proposition from nationwide incomes policies which are designed to share out a fixed amount from the wages pool, leaving the employers with the lion's share from their profits.

The attempt to blame the lack of an

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incomes policy for the low level of morale amongst working people is completely unacceptable. Naturally, the fact of nearly 4 million unemployed has introduced a lessening of militancy in the workers' ranks. However, this is not the first time the workers have been forced into retreat. After the 1926 General Strike the workers hardly dared raise their heads until 1939. It is well to note that sections of the people were in retreat long before the trade unionists. Students have long ago forgotten the heady days of 1968 — many of them have retreated to the SDP!

**Shop stewards**

This part of Tony Lane's article really reaches an all-time low in his widespread criticism of shop stewards. As Pete Carter points out in his contribution to *Marxism Today* (Nov 1982) I have never hesitated to criticise those in the trade union movement who have climbed on the backs of trade unionists to carve out a career for themselves — men like Citrine, Bevin, Tewson and others come to mind; also the need for trade unions to bring themselves up to date in the light of a changing world on such questions as amalgamation, greater democracy etc.

All these questions need to be constantly under review if we are to ensure a strong united trade union movement to withstand the attacks from all sides against us. I believe we are better equipped now than ever before to fight back when the time comes against the present reaction. The TUC General Council has continued to challenge the Government at every level and, despite the weaknesses arising from the antics of Chappell, Weighell and Boyd, its stand for workers' rights is without precedent. This would not be possible without the support of thousands of shop stewards up and down the country. Of course, there are among them some who take advantage of their position to benefit themselves as do some full time officers. This is by no means a new phenomenon but it is a gross slander on the great majority of shop stewards to generalise from a few individual cases. I am privileged to be in regular con-tact with shop stewards, in Coventry and district, all of them continuing to carry out their duties to the workers with very little thought for themselves.

The shop steward is the most democratic representative of the working class. He/she is elected every year or two depending on union rule and he/she is under daily surveillance of the members. Compare this with an MP or a full time official. Undoubtedly the shop stewards are one of the most important links with the working class. They have too often been taken for granted but without them the trade unions would be very weak indeed.

One of the greatest weaknesses on the shopfloor is in the area of communication. There is a weakness in the failure to see as a priority the need to win members for the principles of trade unionism: district officials do not see the importance of keeping the members informed of union policy, and very often union literature, eg, the TUC material on Tebbit, is bogged down between the district committee and the shopfloor. It is vital to overcome these problems if we are to have an informed membership who understand what it is they are expected to defend and if need be fight for. This becomes increasingly urgent in light of the new threat coming once more from the USA — the attempt to introduce the 'Union Busters' organisation to British employers. A spokesman for the AFL-CIO, Charles Macdonald talking of this organisation says:

> 'I think it's sophisticated and controlled terrorism. What they do in organising a campaign is nothing short of a terroristic campaign, working as much as they can to exploit the fears that employees have of losing their jobs.'

The trade unions must start now to nip in the bud this new threat before it is allowed to get off the ground. □


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# Reviews

**IMAGES OF WELFARE: PRESS AND PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO POVERTY**
**Peter Golding and Sue Middleton**
Basil Blackwell/Martin Robertson 1982 pbk £5.95
*ISBN 0 85520 447 8*

**THE POLITICS OF POVERTY**
**David Donnison**
Martin Robertson, 1982 pbk £3.50
*ISBN 0 85520 481 8*

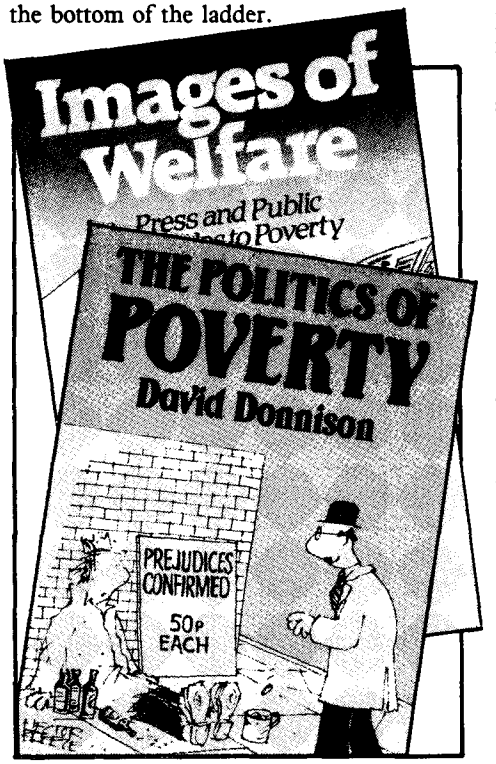
**THE POLITICS OF POVERTY**
**Susanne MacGregor**
Longman, 1981 pbk £2.95
*ISBN 0 582 29524 6*

**POVERTY AND POLITICS**
**Frank Field**
Heinemann, 1982 pbk £4.50
*ISBN 0 435 82306 X*

The past twenty years have seen the numbers in poverty almost double, so that by 1979 more than two million people were living on an income below the offical (supplementary benefit) poverty line. No fewer than 9.5 million — one sixth of the population — had an income less than 40% above the poverty line. These figures give no indication of the effects of Thatcher's policies on the poor — the rise in unemployment and the cuts in benefits, the cuts in real wages and the increased tax burden on working people — because one of the Government's first actions was to cancel the annual calculation of the numbers in poverty. The next set of figures will not be available until after the election.

But perhaps this attempt to conceal the effects of present policies on the poor was unnecessarily cautious. For as Peter Golding and Sue Middleton document in their persuasive and readable book on press and public attitudes to poverty, the British electorate are unusually cynical (by international standards) about the nature and causes of poverty, tending always to 'blame the victim', not only for his or her own plight but for the nation's general economic malaise as well. *Images of Welfare* reports the findings of survey research into popular attitudes to poverty and welfare and documents the way they are shaped (though not perhaps created) by the media.

The early postwar years brought with them a belief not only that poverty had been successfully eradicated in all but a few cases but also a tolerance of those who appeared to have been left behind in the general move toward affluence. Such tolerance perhaps was based on a belief that economic growth would allow some addition to the incomes of the poor without threatening the aspirations of the rest of the population. But the deepening economic crisis which developed after the mid-1960s was accompanied by a re-emergence of hostility towards the poor, and towards the very principle of the welfare state. The author's own survey of attitudes in two cities found that this hostility was most virulent amongst the poor themselves — claimants and the low paid — a phenomenon explained by a divisive resentment channelled towards others alongside them at the bottom of the ladder.




Golding and Middleton place their original findings on public and press attitudes (which include the results of interviews with leading social service correspondents) in a historical and theoretical context. They document the move of the Labour Party away from traditional concerns with poverty and welfare, seduced by the prospect of continued affluence until the mid 1960s and by the fear of continued economic decline thereafter. Meanwhile the Tory Party, who had flirted with notions of equity and social justice in the 1950s, fearing that electoral unpopularity might accompany outright rejection of the wartime enthusiasm for the 'Beveridge Revolution', now turned increasingly towards the Hayekian approach in which the welfare state was seen as 'a treacle well and not a life-belt' and in which inequality was to become a central objective of policy. The populist, anti-welfare rhetoric of the late 70s was sufficient to dislodge the welfare-consensus which had in any case never taken deep root.

This shift in the attitudes of the political parties towards poverty, reflecting and reinforcing popular perceptions, has created a new environment in which the poverty lobby must work, but perhaps also increased the latter's importance. This is a theme developed in three other recent volumes on the politics of poverty. Two of these (David Donnison's *The Politics of Poverty* and Frank Field's *Politics and Poverty*) are essentially autobiographical accounts of events surrounding social security policy during the past decade, seen from rather different perspectives. As Chairman of the Supplementary Benefits Commission between 1975 and 1980, Donnison used his position and authority to campaign for improvements in the supplementary benefit scheme in a way which must sometimes have chilled his establishment colleagues and political masters. Field, as Director of the Child Poverty Action Group between 1969 and 1979 saw the same events from a different angle, but both shared essentially the same objectives and approach.

Susanne MacGregor's *The Politics of Poverty* covers much the same ground but places the events, seen from 'the outside', in the context of social security policy since the war. It should perhaps be said that the voguish title is somewhat misleading for all three books are generally concerned more with social security policy and the role of individual actors than with developments in poverty and inequality in its broader context. They may therefore appeal most to those with a somewhat specialist appetite for details of social security legislation during this period, or to those with a taste for inside

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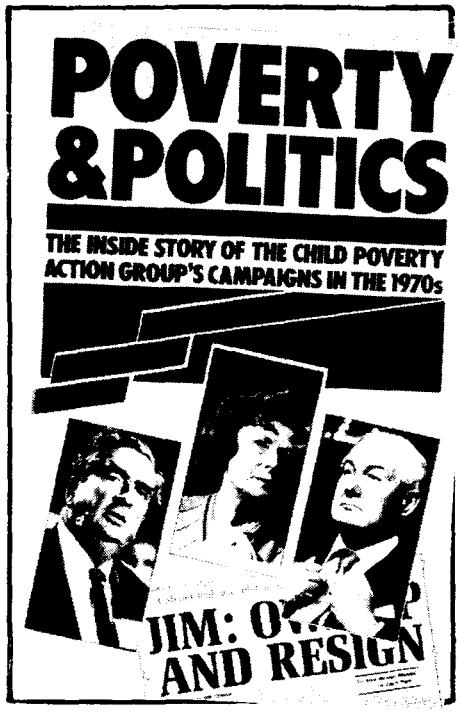
knowledge about the personalities involved rather than to the more general reader. Inevitably, Donnison is most concerned with the administration of supplementary benefits policy; Field with the campaigns for child benefits. 'Whatever question you ask the Child Poverty Action Group', Donnison quips in a friendly jibe, 'bigger child benefits will be part of the answer'. Field explains why. In his view 'The campaign for child benefits has major implications for the structure of British politics, cutting across class interests and mounting an attack on the class mould of twentieth century British politics'.

Both Donnison and Field believe that the poverty lobby must respond to the evident shift in public attitudes towards the poor. Indignant revelation of 'the facts' is no longer sufficient. The labour movement has proved an uncertain ally of the poor, and the poverty lobby must seek new allegiances. While both authors stress the importance of building better links with the trade unions, Donnison argues that the pressure groups must seek to win the support of 'Middle England'; Field that they must employ 'the sharp elbows of the middle classes' to gain more resources for all families, rich and poor alike. 'Poverty' and 'inequality' no longer represent themes around which to build support. The emphasis must be on concepts such as 'the family' and 'children' with




which a broad spectrum of the population can identify and around which they can mobilise. The strategy must be to build a 'family lobby' on what might be the ruins of the 'poverty lobby'. Underlying this strategy is a belief that the poor are a class apart, having interests which only partially coincide with those of the working class as a whole. Susanne MacGregor too believes it to be 'naively optimistic' to expect the patronage of the labour movement for the poor. The poor are 'fragmented, weak, powerless and vulnerable', having little to offer the organised working class in return for their support.

Who, though, are 'the poor'? At least a quarter of them are in families dependent on a full-time wage; others are poor because the resources accumulated while at work are insufficient to tide them over periods of unemployment, sickness and old age. Their interests and experiences are shared with other working people. The dilemma is that these common interests are not always perceived, certainly by the organised labour movement but also — according to Golding and Middleton's research — by the poor themselves. And this, perhaps, is the real failure of the poverty lobby — that poverty is still not a central issue for the radical Left; that the alternative economic strategy (in its many manifestations) has little specifically to say about inequality. If the traditional pressure group tactics of persuasion and discourse with the establishment have failed to achieve their objective of winning real gains for the poor, it is perhaps the tactics that should change, and not the objective.

**Chris Pond**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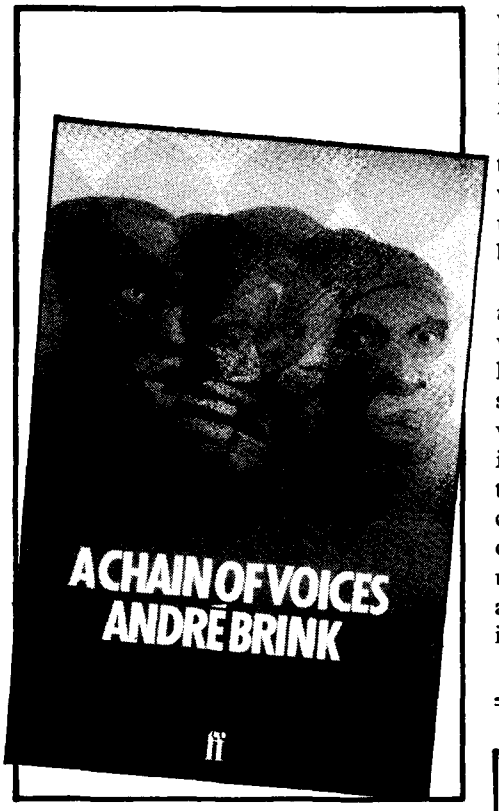



**A CHAIN OF VOICES**
**Andre Brink**
Faber & Faber, 1982; hardback £7.95
*ISBN 0 57111 874 7*

Brink is concerned with the ways in which history is made, with the effect an individual can have upon it and with the limitations placed by it upon the exercise of individual will. In his most recent novel, *A Chain of Voices*, he sets out to investigate the clash between two histories, that of the Afrikaaner and that of the black slave.

The novel is set in 1825, a time when the Afrikaaner farmers felt themselves threatened by the growing jurisdiction of the English from the Cape. Rumours that they will be forced by the English to free their slaves create a general tension in both Afrikaaner and slave communities and drive the Afrikaaners to extremes of cruelty in attempts to shore up the power that they feel is being undermined.

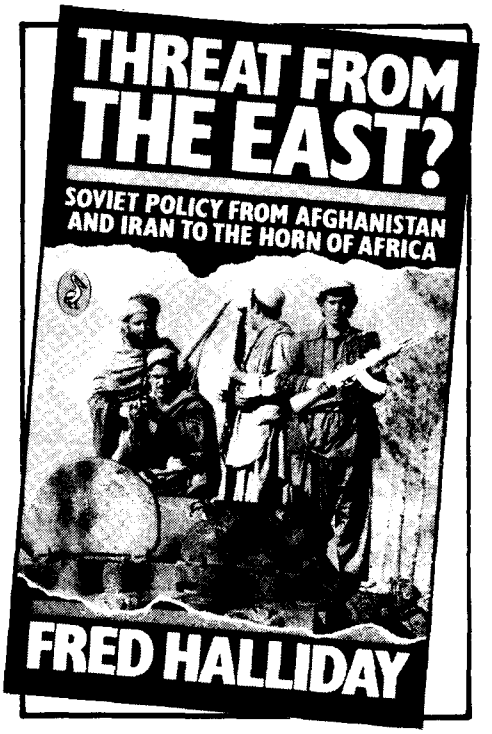
*A Chain of Voices* is Brink's most ambitious novel to date, with the consciousness of each character, black and white, female and male, explored in turn. The chain of events that leads to tragedy is centred on two characters, Nicolaas van der Merwe and Galant his slave. Galant is the most powerfully expressive of all the characters, the metaphors he uses reverberating with repressed passion, while Nicolaas tries feebly to recreate the golden age of childhood equality that Galant has learnt is only a figment of the white imagination.

Yet while Brink's concern is to investigate the particular relations of power between white and black and man and woman, his undeniably powerful analysis is weakened by a central, unquestioned belief.

As in his other historical novel, *An Instant in the Wind*, the sexual act betwen white woman and black man takes place outside history and politics; it is expressive of a sentimental wish towards union of black and white and in both cases, despite a careful investigation of all other aspects of the relationship, it remains unconvincing. In both cases, too, the results of such a union fall outside the time-span of the novel: the sexual act is presented as a whole in itself, ahistorical, transcendental and perfect. So, in *A Chain of Voices*, the vigorous articulacy of each character in the face of the historical circumstances that both forge and constrain their individual consciousnesses, is undermined by being put in opposition to a sexual act that is essentially free of both speech and conflict, and that recreates the golden age that elsewhere Brink has shown to be a sentimental dream.

*A Chain of Voices* is a powerful depiction of a period in the history of South Africa. It shows the roots of the conflict between Afrikaaner and English and the ultimate irrelevance of that conflict to the black majority. Both aspects are important for an understanding of present day South Africa. Yet the vision at the core of *A Chain of Voices* reduces the conflict between historical forces to one between individuals who are unable to communicate. Brink has produced a powerful and gripping historical novel, but he has not produced a political one.

**Sarah Lefanu**




**THREAT FROM THE EAST?**
**Fred Halliday**
Pelican, 1982 pbk £1.75
*0 1402 2448*

After his valuable studies of social and political change in the Arabian peninsula, Iran, and Ethiopia[1], Fred Halliday takes up the question of the impact made by Soviet foreign policy on events throughout this Arc of Crisis that curves from Afghanistan through the Middle East to the Horn of Africa. As the title indicates, he builds his analysis round an examination of Reagan's extravagant claim that 'The Soviet Union underlies all the unrest that is going on. If they weren't engaged in this game of dominoes, there wouldn't be any hot spots in the world'.

I thought Halliday's polemical device of 'knocking down an aunt sally' cramped his analysis considerably. Even though the reds-under-the-bed claim is a standard propaganda line against any attempt, foreign or domestic, to change the established order, it does not form the substance of serious foreign policy analysis by the US administration, let alone by experienced West European governments which are more realistic in their assessments. True to character, this aunt sally is not a worthy target for sustained attack. Moreover, by assembling his arguments to 'knock down' the view that the Soviet Union is a threat to Western interests, he is diverted from developing a more rounded and positive critique of 'the connection between regional political developments and Soviet policy in the area' which he claims as his central theme.

The book is, however, a rich cornucopia of firsthand information on events and policies in a part of the world which has become a focus of the new 'cold war'. It is, of course, a great pity that Halliday was not able to draw on a study of the Palestinians, similar to his

[1] *Arabia without Sultans*, 1975; *Iran: Dictatorship and Development*, 1979; *Revolution in Ethiopia, 1982*.

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extensively researched studies of the four Arc countries 'that are normally singled out as cases of Soviet instigation', in view of their crucial role in the area. From his empirical analysis Halliday concludes that, although the Soviet Union acts in its own interests as a major world power, it cannot be regarded as a threat to Western interests; firstly, because domestic factors have been the main cause of political upheaval in the Arc and, secondly, because the Soviet Union has largely failed to win reliable allies there. He further concludes that, on the contrary, it is the United States which is the chief external catalyst of popular explosions of 'unrest'.

Though Halliday views the Soviet Union's role in the Arc of Crisis more sympathetically than that of the United States, he tends to equate the role of the two superpowers both in attempting to extend their influence in the region and in dangerously exaggerating each other's influence. Certainly he does not see the source of conflict as basically a confrontation between imperialism and national liberation within the capitalist world system, on the one hand, and between imperialism and socialism, on the other. Indeed, he is critical of 'vulgar Marxist explanations of American foreign policy in terms of a quest for raw materials and markets' and of 'persistent left wing and Third World exaggeration of the role of the United States', and he seems uncertain whether 'the USSR is a 'socialist' country in any precise sense of that word'. This lack of theoretical definition weakens his analysis, in my opinion, though it is understandable in view of the paucity of up-to-date Marxist analysis of neo-imperialism and 'actually existing' socialism on which political writers like Halliday can draw.

While it is true that policy decisions in the Arc now have a predominantly national basis, the context in which they are taken has been historically shaped by imperialism which still exercises immense economic and military power through the role played by Western governments and multinationals in the production, purchase, and sale of oil, the recycling of oil funds, technology exports, arms sales, and military bases. Their support for reactionary regimes has been and still is a key factor adversely affecting the domestic balance of class forces. The creation of Israel in Palestine, as a direct consequence of anti-semitism in Europe, and its development as an economic and military strongpoint for neo-imperialism has been a determinant factor impeding the Palestinians' right to nationhood, in particular, and Arab national independence, in general. Thus, imperialism is still a fundamental cause of conflict in the Arc.

To be sure, a new historical element of nationalist conflict between nation states and within nations has now emerged in this region, as in other parts of the Third World, as the Pax Imperialistica has become weaker in the 1970s. This represents a stage of development comparable to that of 19th century Europe but exacerbated by the existence of the two world systems of imperialism and socialism.

In the basic confrontation between imperialism and national liberation, the Soviet Union as a socialist country is a natural ally against imperialism and yet Halliday asserts, correctly, that it has won few permanent allies. This, however, misses the fundamental point that the Soviet Union has at times been able to give crucial assistance to those fighting to achieve national liberation, from Nasser's Egypt to the Palestinians. In this sense, the Soviet Union *is* a threat — to imperialist interests — from the East! Certainly some Soviet acts of intervention in Third World affairs have alienated potential allies for socialism, but the main reason why the Soviet Union's alliances have proved temporary or limited is because the Arc countries have in the end opted for continued incorporation in the capitalist world system rather than for socialism.

The expulsion of the Palestinians from Lebanon by Israel with the passive acquiescence of the Arab states and the negotiation of at least a temporary solution to the crisis by the United States to the total exclusion of the Soviet Union has marked the end of an era of postwar hopes — and in too many cases illusions — that the rising tide of national liberation would lead to socialism. To my mind, the persisting strength of imperialism is well demonstrated by Britain's ability both to accommodate aspirations within the capitalist world system — example, Carrington's initiative on recognition of the PLO — and to mount a show of strength — example, the successful Falklands exercise in organising a 'rapid deployment force' as the modern instrument of gunboat diplomacy.

Perhaps the Arc will cease for a period to be a focus of the new cold war? International tension has only developed when conflict within the capitalist world system has also involved a clash between imperialism and socialism in active alliance with forces opposed to imperialism, and has only reached the state of threatening a third world war when there has been a 'defection' — or the perceived possibility of one — from capitalism: Korea, Nasser's Egypt, Vietnam, Cuba. Quite evidently, there has been no such state of tension over the Israeli invasion of Lebanon — nor, indeed, over the Falklands. (There is no symmetry between the systems, it appears, since East-West tension did not become critical when internal political developments in Poland in 1981 could have led to the restoration of capitalism if martial law had not been imposed.) Now that the process of national liberation has largely run its course, with the important exceptions of Palestine and Namibia, the new stage of political liberation and economic development will present new challenges to imperialism and capitalism and to Soviet foreign policy.

**Jenny Warren**

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# LETTERS

## NATIONALISM

I want to say something about nationalism which has been the subject of articles in *Marxism Today*. The idea has been put forward that the working class of my country must be offered some form of national pride to fill a gap in the politics of the Left.

Firstly perhaps our country's name could be clarified. During the course of his article, Robert Gray developed a strange habit of writing about Britain and British nationalism until he was mentioning Scotland, Ireland, and Wales when he immediately referred to the UK. This made me realise that my country is not Britain but the United Kingdom. It has probably been suggested before but it would certainly help towards a clear national identity if the use of Britain and British was abolished. The workers of Wales, Scotland and England could then be known as Welsh in the UK, Scot in the UK and English in the UK. The Irish are Irish wherever they are, aren't they!

Robert Gray has a false idea of the feelings of ordinary people when he says that, about the crisis of confidence that followed Suez — 'Ordinary people felt a sense of drift, disintegration, and decline.' I can't help wondering where he gained this information. As an ordinary person remembering the period immediately following the Suez War it did not make any difference whatsoever to my feelings as a worker with a family and economic problems to solve. I do have a sense of national loss when I read or hear about cuts in the education of our children and cuts in the National Health Service. I positively bristle at the mention of American nuclear weapons to be hidden in my lovely countryside, or Japanese industrialists taking over our factories. Therefore the working people of the UK have already begun to fill the so-called gap by the wonderful response to the leadership of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. The Labour Party declaration that the next Labour government will take the UK out of the European Common Market is another winner for regaining national sovereignty. Add to these two basic ideas the increase in the struggle against pollution of the environment by the activities of the grasshopper multinational monopolies, the trade unions' opposition to the destruction of our UK basic industries and then ask why does Robert Gray want the Left to worry about 'strong residues of empire and chauvinism'.

*M Turner, London*

## TRAINING

I welcome John Fairley's lucid and accurate article 'The Great Training Robbery' (November issue), and agree with his account of NTI and his criticisms of the labour movement response. I was rather surprised, however, that he failed to mention that the Communist Party is doing precisely what he demands: it has published a statement on NTI, showing it to be part of anti working class government strategy, and is developing policy on training.

The power and influence of the MSC has grown massively, with virtually no democratic control or accountability, under the orders of this government. It is the failure on the part of the labour movement to recognise and analyse the role and function of MSC as an institution that is one of the root causes of the current confusion; some still give uncritical approval ('it's better than nothing') and others shut their eyes and hope it will go away, thus deserting vast numbers of young people, and freely abdicating hard won rights.

NTI as it stands is a prong of the Tebbit attack on trade union power and influence. What we need is a clear understanding of the terms on which this, or any other scheme is acceptable, and a vigorous campaign for the achievement of those terms.

*Susannah Lash, Liverpool*

## PROSPECTS

Stuart Hall's article (November issue) is interesting but it may be a little over pessimistic. Mr Foot is the least popular of the three main party leaders, just as Mrs Thatcher was before the 1979 general election. The underlying trend, that is what the young people are saying, is definitely leftward. If, as seems likely, the Conservatives win the next general election then this trend will continue. The problem is that there has been very little education from the Left and TINA (There Is No Alternative) has become the end product on the working class analysis. In education the Communist Party is streets ahead of the Labour Party and we must work for an even greater lead to be taken here. It may be that if the summer riots of 1981 and 82 continue into the middle of the decade then we could forge a rebellion. If this is to be the case then the CP must take the lead. Finally, as a Christian, I am aware of the need for a Christian-Socialist lead. The strict morality of Socialism is a very important point to get across.

*Tom Moore, Bromley*

## POLAND

In his review of my book *Poland: A Crisis for Socialism*, Dennis Ogden implied the need for more damning criticism of Solidarity. Some of his comments seem to suggest that it was essentially a negative, destructive force actively 'destabilising' Polish society. The issue is obviously of central importance for an understanding and assessment of the decision to impose martial law.

There is no denying the strengthening of the 'radical' trend in the autumn of 1981, but that has to be set in the context of the growing awareness of the authorities' preparations for military rule. That suggested that the government was abandoning the road of compromise and agreement. It provided the political context for naive talk of a provisional government and of a general strike which was to be the union's response to armed repression.

There were persistent attempts to reach agreement. In fact, by the end of November 1981 *Trybuna Ludu* reported practically no strikes in industry following determined appeals by the Solidarity leadership to end all actions that could harm the economy. There was certainly not 'an escalating strike campaign'.

The fundamental issue in Poland's crisis was and is the deep gulf of distrust created by years of lies, incompetence and brutality from the authorities. That could only have been overcome if the PUWP had relaxed its absolute monopoly of power and allowed a democratisation of society. It could never be overcome by condemnations of 'radicals', still less by martial law.

*Martin Myant, Glasgow*

**We welcome your letters for the February issue. They should be no longer than 200 words and arrive at the office not later than Friday, 7 January.**

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# NOTES

## ARTS AND THE COMMUNITY

*Kate Sullivan writes: Two-Way Street: Arts and the Community* is the title of a new Communist Party pamphlet. It began as a series of discussions organised by the Party's Arts and Leisure Committee, and reflects a debate that is taking place on the Left about the relationship between politics and culture in the 1980s. The range is broad, and those who were asked to contribute are practitioners in their own field, and not necessarily members of any political party. Common themes emerge however; in particular, the need to bring together the arts world and the wider community — whether organised labour or other interest groups — to fight against cuts in arts provision, to fight for decentralisation of that provision, and to fight for greater democracy within its agencies. The pamphlet includes papers on cinema, theatre, television, libraries and publishing. It argues for common ownership of the arts, reflecting the thoughts, emotions and aspirations of all, and not simply of a 'cultivated' minority. Available, price 50p, from Central Books, 14 The Leathermarket, London SE1.

## LOCAL COUNCILS AND ECONOMIC PLANNING

*Judy Sadler writes:* In response to high unemployment many councils are intervening in the local economy; this intervention is being increasingly accepted as a normal function of a local authority. This development is described in the latest SERA (Socialist Environment and Resources Association) pamphlet *Council Action for a Socialist Economy*. SERA identify a lack of direction in these developments, which they are trying to remedy. The pamphlet argues for a legal structure which would give councils the freedom to innovate without endangering basic services. The pamphlet (price £1.20) is available from SERA, 9 Poland Street, London W1.

## OCCUPIED PALESTINE

*Maria Loftus writes: The Morning Star* have published a pamphlet by David Whitfield on the struggle of the Palestinian people. The author has recently spent some time in Israel as a *Morning Star* journalist.

The pamphlet deals mainly with the Palestinians living on the West Bank — the focus of struggle in the Middle East. It gives the history and background information on the struggle of the Palestinians and has a wealth of material on the daily lives of people living in the West Bank. Well illustrated, and with useful maps, *A Land with People* is a very useful introduction for those trying to understand the Middle East.

*A Land with People* is available from the *Morning Star* and most left bookshops, price £1.50.

## MARX AND AFRICA

*Tony Humphries writes:* We have just had news from West Africa of a conference next year on Marx and Africa, organised at Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria. This is an important development in the year of Marx's centenary. The Africa Centre can provide further information on the conference. The Africa Centre will also be organising a series of meetings on socialism in Africa next year. More information from Tony Humphries, The Africa Centre, 38 King Street, London WC2.

## ACTION DEFEATS THE BILL

*George Wake writes:* The Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions have recently published a pamphlet *'Action Defeats the Bill'*. The pamphlet tells the story of the defeat of the Industrial Relations Act — important reading for those who are planning to defeat Tebbit's anti-trade union legislation. This pamphlet is particularly aimed at shop stewards and trade union organisations. If you would like copies, write, with a donation if possible, to George Wake, LCDTU, 148 Glenny Road, Barking, Essex IG11 8QQ.

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